

## THE HAPPIEST SUMMER

For Michael,  
with love from his  
grandmother,  
Myra Scovd

# THE HAPPIEST SUMMER

Myra Scovel

*Illustrated by Susan Perl*

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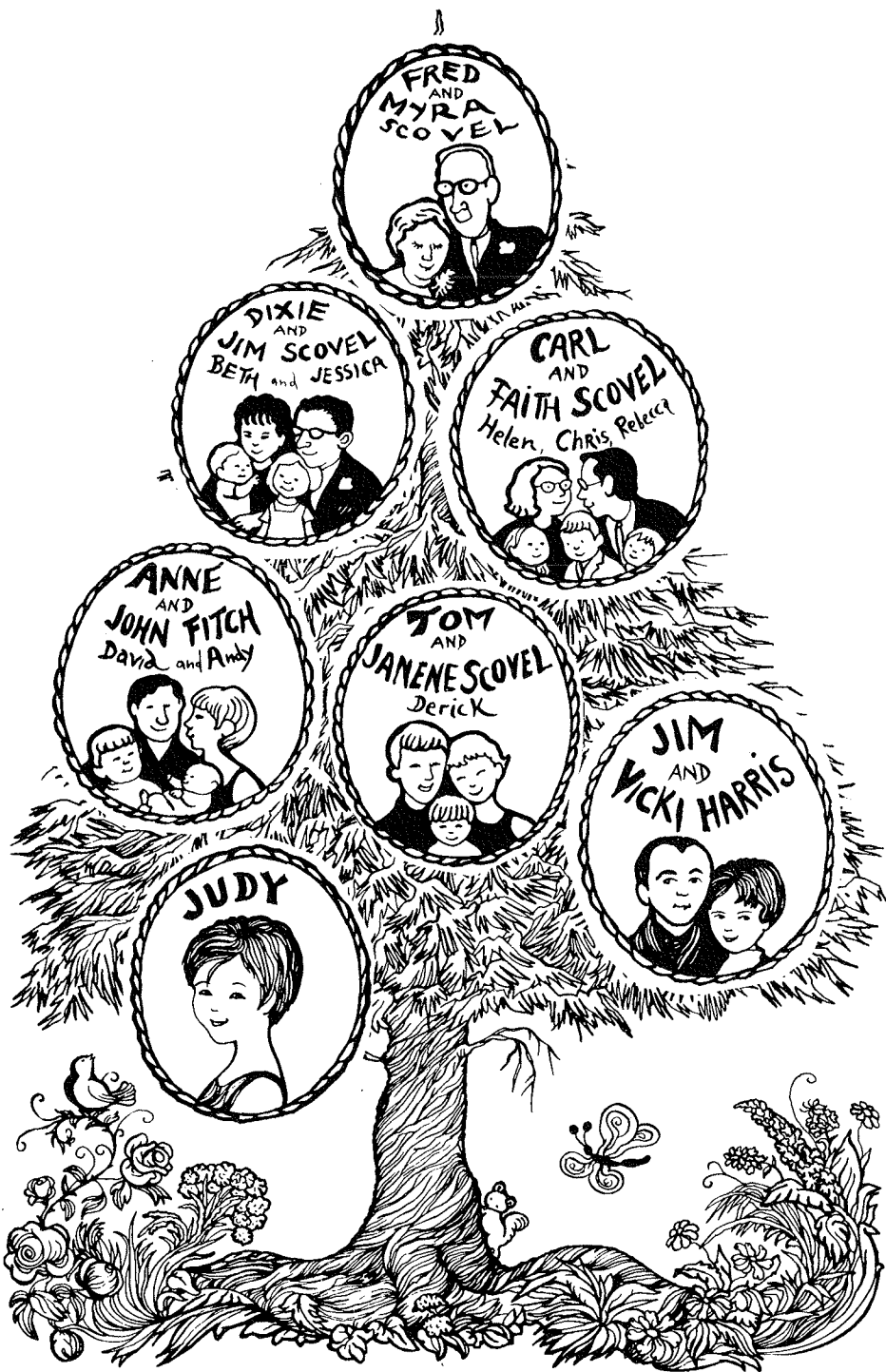
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Designed by C. Linda Dingle

For Fred,  
for the twelve,  
and for each one  
who helped to make it

THE HAPPIEST SUMMER



1~

"I don't think it's a good thing to have a father as wonderful as mine," said Judy. We were sitting in the garden under the willow, coffee cups in hand. "Do you realize what it is doing to my life? I keep looking and looking for a man like Daddy and I never find him. There just aren't any."

Judy had known since she was sixteen that she would have to be an old maid. We had been talking about where she might be spending her next birthday, her twenty-sixth.

"I see what you mean," I told her. "I realize that when I married your father, I cleared the market, but I've always thought of it as an asset to you children. I see, now, it might be harder for you."

"So what shall I do, just give up? You've been telling me since I was thirteen that somewhere in the world, my prince, as you call him, is waiting for me, God help him."

"God will. Your prince is the one He has chosen for you."

"Well, I wish He'd hurry up and bring that guy out of hiding before I have to meet him with a hearing aid, false teeth, and a cane. How can you be so sure about all this, Mother? I know—because you've been praying ever since I was born for the boy who would grow up to marry me, quote, unquote."

"That adds up to a lot of wasted prayer if it isn't true. I prayed for the three boys' wives and for Anne's and Vicki's husbands and they're all happily married."

"Yes, even Vicki, your youngest."

Why had I said it? Anguish in those deep, brown eyes. I could feel her thinking, "I'm the only one who has failed you." The leaves were making shadow patterns on her lovely face. "We need more coffee," she said, and went into the house.

How many times had we discussed the pressures society puts on a woman and the sense of failure that is persistently ground into her by all the little inuendos to make it clear that she hasn't quite "made it" unless she has caught her man! Why had I dragged in her sisters' marriages when she needed least to hear it? Here I was, *being* society.

But certainly not because I felt she would be a failure if she didn't marry. Laying aside the fact that there weren't enough men being born to provide for every girl, we knew many women who were living rich, fulfilled lives and getting along very well without a husband, thank you. But they were not Judy. Every dream she had ever dreamed included the love of the most wonderful man in the world. She had hoped to marry young—in college. Would it be while she was getting her M.A. in Music Education? During her orientation for missionary work overseas? On the ship going to Egypt? During the bombing in Cairo? In Germany while awaiting her reassignment? Now she was home on a short furlough before leaving again for overseas. The years had passed. Hope was running out.

I tried to look cheerful as she walked across the grass and handed me my cup. She sat, tense, on the very edge of the long chair and said grimly, "Mother, tell me the truth. Do you honestly believe I will ever get married, or are you just telling me these things to keep my hopes up?"

"I honestly believe you will be married," I replied without flinching from her gaze. "I don't know when, but I know that someday you and he will find each other and that when you do, you will know it was worth waiting for."

"If I could only be sure, I wouldn't mind waiting," she said, sighing. Then, "Let's take supper over to the Stony Point Park. It's such perfect weather and Daddy always loves a picnic. I'll go in and put some eggs on to boil."

For the moment, life for her was in focus again. But for the first time, I had to face whether or not I really did believe what I had promised; or whether, subconsciously, I *was* just trying to keep up her hopes. I could honestly assure myself that up to within the past few moments, I had never consciously doubted that one day she would be married.

Suppose I were wrong. Was it fair to her to give her false hopes? But *if* I were wrong, why had God let me go on praying for the wrong thing? Why hadn't the burden of prayer shifted toward preparing her for whatever lay ahead? Perhaps this was the way I should be praying now.

I found I couldn't give up this boy. He belonged to the family; he was my son through prayer, as our other two sons-in-law were. There had been times over the years when I seemed to feel that this son-to-be was in danger or in trouble and the prayers had been fervent that God would see him through. What if all this had been simply wishful thinking? "God, guide me and guide Judy in our thinking," I prayed. "And if you no longer want me to pray for this sixth son, please make it clear to me."

Either I was very deaf, or very stubborn, or things were all right as they were; the prayers for Judy's husband continued.

After the few weeks with us, she was sent to Iran to teach there until her visa came through for India. January, 1968, found her at the hill station of Kodaikanal, South India, where



she was to teach music in a school for American children and those of other nationalities. Her three-year term abroad for the United Presbyterian Church would be completed one year from the following June. "I've made a bargain with God," she wrote.

"You make no bargains with God," I replied in the next letter. "You go all the way with Him, as you did when you made your decision to be a missionary. It has to be His will, not yours."

She wrote always of the "current incumbent." One or the other of us usually gave him a nickname—"Einstein" (the scientist), "Your W.H.O. friend," "The Cleveland Caliph," "Wordsworth" (the poet—"He doesn't understand my poetry and I understand his too well"). Clearly, the prince had not galloped up on his charger. ("Did it ever occur to you, Mother, that he may have been killed in the war?")

Then, one day, in reply to a question I had asked about the one I called "the Member of Parliament," all whimsy ceased. As seriously, as simply, yet with as much drama as Zacchaeus' announcement, she wrote, "His name is John." With those words I knew that she had found him. It only needed the next sentence to confirm what I already knew. "He is just the kind of a man I've always dreamed of marrying. Funny, though; we aren't in love. We just enjoy doing everything together." I went into her room, knelt beside her bed and thanked God with a flood of joy that washed everything I did or thought for the rest of the day.

As I went about my work, I kept wondering why our family had been given so much happiness when other families, far more deserving, seemed to have one deep trouble after another. I wondered if joy and sorrow balanced out for everyone in the end, or beyond the end, in heaven. We had had a portion of our suffering. Six of our twenty-one years as medical missionaries in China had been spent in the midst of the

Sino-Japanese War. We had lived years at a time within the sound of gunfire. Our house and yard had been strafed more than once by bullets from low-flying planes. We and our five children (I, pregnant with the sixth) had lived in a Japanese internment camp. We had known hunger, poverty, dirt, crowded living conditions. In South China, we had endured, for a year and a half, the prisonlike restrictions of life under the Communist regime.

The six years in India had been easier, but living there had meant the rigors of a new culture, the discipline of a new language, another wrench from new-found friends when we left. By God's grace, we came out of those experiences far richer than we would have been had I followed my own selfish desires to remain in our one little corner of our one little town. We would not have chosen these experiences, but we wouldn't have missed them for the world. China became our second home, the birthplace of our children. The friends we made were more than friends. Now, just to hear the word "China" filled us with a loving warmth. If the same were true of India in a somewhat lesser degree, it was only because we were there for a shorter period of time.

Or was it because we had suffered more with our Chinese friends? I wondered. I went outside to fold the clothes from the line and looked out over the Hudson, once more thankful for these hills, this river, appreciated as never before because we now knew their value. "How little we know of the value of suffering," I thought, "or of what pain actually means in our lives. Hunger lets you know how good an orange tastes; crowding teaches you the luxury of a room for each child. Perhaps pain and anguish bring blessings we aren't able to learn as yet."

Be that as it may, happiness was certainly much easier to live with. Oh, what a good feeling it was! I could hardly wait till

Fred got home so I could tell him. Then I remembered there was nothing to tell, really. I was the only one who had this assurance. Certainly Judy had none. "He's back in England and I'll probably never see him again," she had written later in the letter. "And anyway, we aren't in love. I don't know why I get so upset when I go five days without hearing from him." There really wasn't anything to tell Fred that he couldn't read for himself in the letter.

I might have known he would understand. "Shall we tell them they're in love?" he asked me that evening, sitting in his big leather chair, letter in hand. "No, we'd better let them find out for themselves," he decided.

Apparently the need to know became imperative. One day in November we received a letter from our daughter, asking our advice. She had to make a decision. She had been asked to take a teaching position in Williamson, New York, where she had taught before going overseas. An early reply was requested. In order to decide, she had to know how she felt about John and (what we could see was even more frightening) how John felt about her. She asked us whether or not she was justified in using her money to go to England during her Christmas holiday. We read her letter together the evening it came.

" 'I'm rolling in dough,' " Fred read aloud. "I'm glad someone in this family is. Where did she get all that money?"

"It only means that if she doesn't buy anything for a year and doesn't eat for a few months, she will have just enough to pay her fare to England and return. You know Judy. What do you think she should do?"

"Suppose she waits until June when her term ends, as they originally planned," said Fred. "She'd have to give up the Williamson job entirely, or promise to take it no matter what happened between the two of them."

"That's true," I said, "and as it is now, she is building up

her hopes day by day. If she waits till June and has them dashed to the ground . . . oh, I don't think I could bear it."

"Then you think she ought to go?"

"What do you think?"

"I think she ought to go," he replied. "They'd better find out how they stand, the sooner the better for both of them."

"Honey, you are the most wonderful man in the world," I told him. "Lots of fathers would have said, 'She's crazy, spending all that money.' "

Our own preparations for Christmas were colored by our expectations. I would not let myself think for one moment of an unhappy outcome. Everything we heard about John made us feel they were made for each other. What a lot we would have to talk over with Carl and Faith in Boston!



## 2~

Arriving at the home of our second son, in Boston, was like arriving at the Fezziwigs' Ball, with not only the hostess, but all of us "one vast, substantial smile." Before we were out of the car, the old door of the narrow five-story manse on Beacon Street swung open so lustily it almost lost its wreath of evergreens.

"Merry Christmas, Nai-nai! Merry Christmas, Pop-pop!" Helen, Chris, and Rebecca were running down the steps, hugging us until the packages popped out of our arms. Carl and Faith rescued the gifts between their hugs, then hurried us out of the cold and into the front hall.

Tearing down the staircase came son Tom; and from the kitchen, his wife, Janene, with our youngest grandson, Derick. The three had driven from Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Tom was working on his Ph.D. in linguistics. In the midst of another round of shouts and hugs, they told us about our daughter, Anne, her John and their young David, whom the Tom Scovels had visited in Saranac Lake, New York. Because of John's responsibilities for three small churches, Anne and her family could not be with us for Christmas.

"Jim and Dixie and the two little girls can't come either," Carl told us. "At the last minute, *Newsday* didn't feel it could

bring out the Christmas edition of the paper without the assistance of your First-Born."

"You're stuck with the two families of us and that's all," said Tom. "I guess you know your youngest can't come, either. I wouldn't mind having her husband's job right now. It must be something to be in a satellite tracking station in Florida during this moon shot."

"They'll write us all about it," said Fred. "I never knew such a letter writer as our Jim Harris."

"Where will Judy be?" asked Janene, helping me off with my boots.

"I'll tell you later when we all settle down," I whispered.

"Well, Mom and Dad, cheer up. You've got the cream of the crop right here," said Carl.

"There are those who might question that statement," I told him, "but we're grateful for small favors." Oh, it was good to be in the midst of family banter again.

And I loved this old house. How many Christmas homecomings had it known? I wondered. Living had seeped into its joints and it was rich with the welcomes and farewells of decades. How many times had that mahogany stair rail been wound with evergreens as it was now? And that alcove near the second floor must have held scores of such arrangements of evergreens and red berries.

"But none so pretty as this one," I said to myself. Faith had inherited her mother's artistry in arranging them. I felt a sudden surge of Christmas excitement, anticipating one gift I knew, I hoped, would be under the Christmas tree—a small, living wreath of partridge berries, princess pine, and reindeer moss, carefully wrapped in wet paper towels to keep it moist. Faith made one for me every year, going into the woods to search for materials. The wreath would continue to grow in Beloved Grandmother's rosebud, green-edged porcelain soup plate, sometimes until as late as April.

Carl, Tom, and their father left to park the car under Boston Common, just across the street from the house.

"The stew!" I suddenly remembered. "I've brought a stew for supper. It's in the back of the car."

Helen was out of the house before I had finished speaking, her brown hair bouncing on her shoulders.

"Pop-pop, the stew! The stew!" she shouted.

"The *what?*" I could hear him call. "Oh, yes, the stew."

In no time the kettle was in the huge kitchen. Janene had coffee and tea ready for us; Faith set out the mugs. The noise sank to a mere pre-Christmas high.

What had I ever done to deserve such daughters-in-law? All three were different from one another. Jim's wife, Dixie, probably stuffing a turkey in East Setauket, Long Island, was a petite brunette. Janene, tall, slim, her face framed by short, brown curls, moved quickly about the kitchen, as efficient as if she'd been working in her own. Faith, relaxed, composed, was apparently unperturbed by this sudden influx of in-laws. I liked the new way she wore her honey-blonde hair, in a longish bob.

"You'll be sleeping on the third floor, next to our room," she said. "A doctor and his wife from Czechoslovakia are living with us. And Salim is here, too. You remember Salim, the student from Lebanon?"

"Yes, of course. He was here last Christmas. We liked him so much. I see it's International House, as usual."

"Our husbands come by it naturally, don't they, Faith?" said Janene.

When Salim came in, he gave us a warm, Lebanese embrace, and we met the young Czech doctor (with whom Fred began to talk medicine at once) and his very beautiful wife. Behind their gentle smiles lay the sorrow which must have been a heavier load than they would let us see. How could it be otherwise, seeing us together? So many loving families had



been torn apart during these critical times in the Middle East and in Czechoslovakia.

We pulled open the strong oak table to its full six leaves. Cousin Harriet Allen had given it to us and we had passed it on to Carl, since he was the only one in the family with a house big enough to hold it. The whole household gathered around it, eating our bowls of hot stew with flat cakes of Syrian bread which Faith had found in one of the Boston shops. Before we knew it, it was time to get dressed for the Christmas Eve service. Carl, already in his clericals, went on ahead.

"I feel perfectly at home in this church and I'm not sure why," I said to myself as we walked down the aisle between the white and mahogany of King's Chapel. "Is it this feeling I have for old buildings—the invisible presence of the many people who, over the almost three centuries of this church's existence, have worshiped, sung, and prayed here?"

Certainly part of my love for it was the excellent music. How hungry I was for good church music! I reached for the program the warden had handed to Fred as he closed the little door of our pew, the little door whose latch always seemed to say, "There you are and there you shall stay until I see fit to let you out." The choir was being assisted by the Boston Renaissance Ensemble; treble and bass viols, three recorders, and a harpsichord. Or was the organ playing a stop that sounded like a harpsichord? I couldn't tell, as the music was coming from the choir loft behind us. "A good place for the choir," I thought. It left the worship center uncluttered by uncomfortable people on exhibition. "If I don't get anything else for Christmas, this music is gift enough," I whispered to Fred.

Silence, now, in the candlelit church, then a voice saying the prayers of an old, old liturgy. Surely one of my big reasons for loving this church was because the prayers being said were the

prayers of my childhood, in the old stone Episcopal Church in Mechanicville. How little I dreamed, then, that I would be hearing those prayers, one day, in the voice of our Unitarian minister son, Carl. These prayers belonged to him and to King's Chapel, too. Though slightly changed, they had been a part of its liturgy since 1686.

Fred squeezed my hand and we looked at each other wonderingly. Where had he come from, this little-boy-grown-up, this man in the pulpit? "Through us, but not of us," as the Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran, had said. Salim had caught our glance and smiled, understanding.

As we trudged through the snow on our way home, we talked of Judy.

"Where is she tonight—flying to England?"

"Has she met John yet? Are they lovers or strangers?"

"How soon can we know?"

"Mom, you'll phone us if you hear, won't you?"

Whatever the outcome, all were agreed that it was better for Judy to know now than for her to go on dreaming and then find the dream shattered. She was right to have gone, whatever the cost. I smiled to myself in full assurance that the dream would come true, but said nothing.

"Let's go caroling," said Carl.

No city in the world is so made for celebrating Christmas as is Boston—snow piled high in the Common, every tree shimmering down on the life-size figures of the nativity scenes; snow banked against the walls of tall houses, making them look like English Christmas cards; people crunching the frozen sidewalks past the State House, itself a Christmas card; church-bells ringing through the brittle air; and carols in the square where, on Christmas Eve, no one draws a shade and even commoners like us can look in on crystal chandeliers, spangled Christmas trees, lighted candelabra on the marble mantels, and beautiful people in satins and velvets entertaining home-

coming families and guests while we, who are strangers, stand on their doorsteps singing "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen, Let Nothing You Dismay . . ."

Then home to drink hot spiced punch, set up the crèche, decorate the tree, kiss grandchildren good-night . . . it must be good-morning, I remember no night. Derick is crawling into bed, kissing us awake.

"Nai-nai, Pop-pop, wake up," said this likeness of my husband's early photographs. "Lots of things under the tree. Come see."

And so there were; so many things, too many, when people were in need. I thought of all the department store clerks who had crawled into bed last night, wanting only to sleep all day, wanting only to forget Christmas and their aching feet, the masses of faces crowding before them, shoving, pushing, buying. Yet all these tired clerks would wrap their gifts, chosen with love and care, as we had chosen and wrapped ours. When else, in the whole wide year, would the people of an entire country forget their own wants and sacrifice time, energy, and money to buy just the right gift for each member of the family, each close friend? That we are a nation of people willing to go through such torture, not for ourselves but for others, is the miracle only Christmas seems to produce!

Helen and Chris made careful piles of their gifts, going back to their special corners from time to time to count them and to look at each one again and again. It reminded me of the separate places where our own children had collected their gifts—under a table, behind an armchair, on the bottom step—insisting upon the same spot each year.

Someone had given Carl a large globe. There, in the middle of the floor, sat Tom, showing Salim, the Czech doctor, his wife and their friend (who had come to spend the day) where he and Janene had worked as missionaries in Thailand and where we lived in Stony Point, New York. It seemed such a

perfect picture of what Christmas should be. Here we were, sitting together on the Birthday of Him whose coming had erased for us the boundaries of the troubled world these young people now held in their hands.

To church for the beautiful Festival of Lessons and Carols; then back to the manse for a Christmas dinner to end all Christmas dinners—turkey with all the “traditionals” including both pumpkin and mince pies, ice cream, salted nuts, and coffee. We could hardly rise from the table, but it was time for us to leave.

Carl and Tom went to the garage with their father, seeming to want to be with him till the last possible moment. We watched them walk off together. Fred missed his sons terribly. He missed his daughters, too, in a sad I’ve-been-deserted way. But he missed the male companionship of his sons. He was always delighted when Jim could get over from Long Island for an important televised football game. And if he were alone, he still talked aloud as he had to them when he had been watching with them: “Now, what did they do that for, the crazy idiots?” “Wasn’t that beautiful?” “Did you see that play!”

From the time the boys had learned to walk, there had always been an element of conspiracy around the men in our family, a we-know-something-you-girls-don’t-know feeling they gave us, which seemed to provide them sanctuary. Now those three backs were swinging off across Boston Common, shoulders at exactly the same tilt, as if bound on a secret adventure. We *knew* they were going to the garage to pick up the car—but were they? Their stride looked like much more than that.

“Perhaps, subconsciously, man has had to raise this built-in wall to give himself some respite from us,” I thought. I was suddenly sorry for males now being hounded out of *all* sanctuary by liberating females. Where could man go to enjoy the

security of their little-boy gangs? To the garage, perhaps their last refuge.

"In a way, it's like the hairdresser's for women," Judy had once said. "Can't you just hear Daddy phone, 'Can you take me for points and plugs? About ten? Okay, I'll be there.'"

"The grease pit may be the last bastion of civilized man," I told Janene and Faith as we talked about our men. "Take that away from them and they'll have to go back to clobbering us over the head and dragging us off to their caves."

When they returned a few ages later, I asked, "What took you so long?"

"Just the usual," said Fred. But their faces wore a secret, satisfied look.

The mailbox was empty when we got home. "We might have known," said Fred. "It would be too early to expect a letter from Judy by December twenty-third when we left and there is never a delivery on Christmas Day . . . is there?"

"Sometimes," I told him.



### 3~

Three days later, Judy's letter arrived, post-marked India. She had spent the most miserable Christmas of her life. At the last moment, the Indian Government had refused to issue her no-objection-to-return visa. If she had left for England, she would have been unable to complete her year of teaching.

"I asked God to stop me if He didn't want me to go," she wrote, "and did He ever answer my prayer! Boy, did He ever!"

In the days following we lived in the gloom of her gloom. I had been so sure that all would be well. "So much for premonitions," I said to myself. "So much for thinking you had your own pipeline through to God." True, all was not over between Judy and John. This disappointment might even draw them closer together. "You die hard," I told myself, and sunk back into gloom. God might have His plans for them; I was sure He had, but He wasn't including me in the planning stage, that was certain. I was left to cling desperately to an ultimate outcome.

Fred was late for dinner and very tired when he got home on the night of December 30. All the problems of the United Presbyterian overseas hospitals seemed to have avalanched on

his desk in the New York office, as well as unexpected health emergencies for not one, but two missionaries, necessitating arrangements for meeting them at airports, obtaining specialists and hospital beds, getting in touch with their families in this country. This was no time to continue pouring out my woes about Judy. I was glad the evening meal was one of his favorites—rice, pork with green peppers and candied ginger, broccoli, ice cream, homemade cookies, and coffee.

"Please let me do the dishes tonight," I begged. "You look so tired."

"No, you've been working all day, too. You got the meal and even baked fresh cookies. The dishes are *my* job." We both smiled, remembering the aprons Judy had made him one Christmas: the brown one with "OUT!" sewn on it in yellow—Fred's usual remark when any of us went into the kitchen to help him; and the blue one with "MY JOB" sewn on it in red. He sighed a long sigh. I quickly brought the subject away from Judy and back to household chores.

"But I love to cook, you know it. It rests me after the day of writing."

"Well, doing dishes rests me. It's so good to be able to do something mechanical that doesn't require any decisions."

I knew he was only doing it to help me, but I also knew when I was beaten. I stayed in the living room, folded the tablecloth, let down the leaves of Mother Scovel's old claw-foot table, spread out the piece of Chinese embroidery, and replaced the dish holding Faith's Christmas wreath. A few new sprouts of the green of the partridge berry were already beginning to show. The telephone rang in the kitchen and Fred answered it. His first "Well, *hi!*" let me know it was one of the children. Good; we both needed cheering. I ran for the upstairs telephone.

"Judy!" I gasped when I heard her voice. "Where are you?"



"In England"—she was trembling—"with John, and we're engaged!"

"Oh, Judy, that's wonderful! We're so happy for you," I was saying as Fred was saying, "Well, that didn't take you long."

"Here's John," said Judy. "He wants to apologize for springing this on you so suddenly."

That young man could only have been stunned by the joy with which he was welcomed into a family to which, up to that moment, he had considered himself a stranger.

When at last I got into my workroom next morning, it was almost impossible to settle down to the children's book on the Americas. The good news of the night before kept nosing its way in. Judy had gone to Madras to collect the refund on her air ticket. The travel agent had said, "I'm sure there is some mistake. You are only going to England as a tourist for a couple of weeks. Let's see if we can't get that visa." They had spent the day going from office to office and by night she was on her way to England. She and John were going out this very day to buy her engagement ring from the same jeweler who had sold John's parents theirs.

Gradually we would learn that John's home was in Sheffield where he had worked in the steel mills as a young man and after college. He had been in India under the British equivalent of our Peace Corps, Volunteer Service Overseas. Assigned to a Catholic Mission (John was Anglican), he had set up a foundry section for the Mission's trade school. He wanted very much to go back to India for another term to teach the last two years of the course he had started in pattern making. That would mean another term under V.S.O. If such proved impossible, he and Judy might go to Iran under British A.I.D.

They had met at the home of an Anglican priest, for whose services Judy played the organ. John loved music, jazz and

classical, and so did Judy. They both enjoyed hiking and climbing. Though they had only known each other for about ten days before John had to leave for England, a voluminous correspondence followed. "In some ways, perhaps I know him better than if we'd been together all this time," she wrote. "We might not have expressed our deepest feelings, but we found it easy to write about them."

The wedding was set for December. Judy would be home in June. We'd have her to ourselves for six whole months. Or would we?

Fred and I had talked about this the night Judy phoned. "Right now she doesn't realize how miserable she'll be without John," I'd said to Fred. "It wouldn't surprise me if they changed their minds and were married earlier."

"I'll give them till June," he'd replied.

Oh, it was wonderful to be so happy, so relieved, so full of praise to God, whom I could have believed all along had I not chosen to doubt. How many times, when I'd prayed for Judy, had I confidently repeated Father Scovel's verse for us when we went to China: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Yet, at the first disappointment in *our* plans for her going to England, I had doubted God's ability to carry out *His* plans for her. What would I have been like if His plan had been for her not to marry John? Untold numbers of women prayed for their daughters to have the same fulfillment they had known, but it did not happen. What right had I to be so undeservedly blessed?

Guilt at having what others couldn't have followed me around the workroom next morning. It was of no use; I couldn't write anything. I put away the manuscript. Perhaps some research on "The Blessing of the Animals" chapter would hold my attention. I musn't waste time. There was work to be done and it wasn't right to be so happy when the whole

world was suffering. I got out the letters and articles on the animals, feeling very virtuous now that I was miserable.

Suddenly an old legend crossed my mind: "There are no prayers heard in heaven except the prayers of thanks." It couldn't be true, of course. Didn't we all treat heaven as if it were the office of the Great Ombudsman, where our complaints were investigated and settled to our advantage? Still, it was a legend worth pondering. Just suppose that only the prayers of thanks were heard in heaven. "Poor, lonely God," I thought. "With the way things are today, heaven would be an old, unused, cobwebby place." Certainly we all had *something* we could thank Him for. And who more than the Scovels? Why, we owed it to God to revel in this happiness!

"Listen, up there! You angels can get out the polish and shine up the halos. You're going to get such a blast of joy it may blow you right out of heaven."

I could see it all as a television show, one of those lovely color-and-fantasy ones . . .

# 4~

## THE DAY IT HAPPENED DOWN THERE

### CAST

CHERUB ALVIN .....	A black cherub
CHERUB BILL .....	A rosy-cheeked blond cherub
CHERUB CH'ING MING .....	An Asian girl-cherub
OTHER CHERUBS	
FATHER-SIR'S HENCHMAN ....	A past-middle-aged man, kindly, if dignified, rather like a church elder
FATHER-SIR .....	The usual Blake-like figure with the face of a beloved grandfather.
OLD MAN	
YOUNG MAN	
OTHER RESIDENTS OF HEAVEN	

### SET

*Heaven, all white and gold and filling the top half of the television screen, is a huge flat cloud like a raft covered with fluffy white "snow."*

*To the right, behind the raft, stands a golden castle. To the right of the castle, invisible at first, is nestled a simple cabin which might have been picked up in the north woods and set down in heaven.*

*Immediately below heaven is space (midnight blue with a few stars, galaxies, planets). This is sky for the world below. As the world turns, a running montage of panoramic and close-up shots portray the news of the day—Vietnam, the ghetto, crowded schools, riots. Amassed food in supermarkets contrast with a hunger scene. Plastic flowers on department store shelves alternate with denuded plots for new housing. Every time the “globe” gets around to England, a tiny puff of color rises from it.*

*On the raft overlooking the world, several small cherubs in a row are lying on their tummies, peering over the edge. In the front row, showing intense interest in what is happening below, are three of the cherubs.*

*Concessions will have to be made in the use of human speech. Here in heaven, of course, thoughts are communicated directly from one soul to another.*

CHERUB ALVIN

Where is it?

CHERUB BILL

Right over there. No, stupid, you aren't looking where I'm pointing.

CHERUB CH'ING MING

I see it! In the middle of that tiny island!

CHERUB ALVIN

That little puff of light? Whillakers! It's getting bigger!

CHERUB BILL

Alvin, did you ever see anything like it before? I haven't.

CHERUB ALVIN

Well, no; but once or twice I *felt* something like it.

CHERUB CH'ING MING

Oooh! All those sparkles and puffs of color! They make me shiver they're so beautiful!

*The other cherubs push forward, trying to get a look. When they see it, they "Oooh" and "Abbh!", wriggle and squirm with joy, lie on their backs, kick up their bare feet, then turn back quickly so as not to miss any of it.*

CHERUB BILL

Somebody ought to call Father-Sir's Henchman.

CHERUB ALVIN

I'll go.

*He runs off to do so and returns with FATHER-SIR'S HENCHMAN, who stands, peering over the edge as England comes by and the cloud of color appears.*

FATHER-SIR'S HENCHMAN

Hm. You say the cloud is getting larger?

OTHER CHERUBS

Every minute.

It's twice as big as it was.

Look, it covers that whole part of the country!

CHERUB ALVIN

I thought I saw another one just then, right near New York City.

HENCHMAN

Perhaps I should go and tell him.

CHERUB BILL

If I were Father-Sir, I'd really want to see this.

HENCHMAN

Would you, now?

OTHER CHERUBS

I think He'd want to know.

I do, too.

Me, too.

HENCHMAN

I wish I could be sure of that. I haven't called Him about things down there in a long, long time. *He peers down again.*

Oh, I say, that *is* growing larger.

And I do believe there is another one.

*He hurries off in the direction of the castle, followed by the cherubs whom he tells to wait on the steps. FATHER-SIR'S HENCHMAN goes to the cabin next door. By now, very much excited, he knocks.*

VOICE FROM WITHIN

Yes?

HENCHMAN

Father-Sir, there is something happening down in the world; something very unusual.

VOICE

What is it this time, Hennie?

HENCHMAN

It's just a . . . a . . . well, a tiny cloud, a kind of explosion of light.

VOICE

Leave me alone, Hennie. I'm tired of explosions.

HENCHMAN

But this one is different, Father-Sir.

VOICE

That's what you said when you called me on August 6,  
1945.

HENCHMAN

But Father-Sir, this one is all light and fire and cloud and  
it's getting bigger and bigger, like a mush—

VOICE; *sternly*

Don't use that word. I never want to hear it again. Batten  
down all prayer hatches and leave me alone till I decide  
whether to rain down a flood or to—

HENCHMAN

But Father-Sir, the cherubs! They'll be so disappointed if  
you don't come.

VOICE

The cherubs have seen it, too? Why didn't you tell me that  
in the first place, Hennie? Ask the children to keep careful  
watch and if there are any changes, send one of them to  
tell me. *Long sigh.* It's all so different from what I planned  
for that beautiful sun-lit garden.

*A commercial here, if you must, but please watch it. No "Love soap  
has a heavenly fragrance" or "Riding in this car can be simply  
divine." On second thought, no commercial at all.*

FADE-OUT, then FADE-IN again to a large group of heavenly  
people standing to peer over the edge of the raft. The cherubs lie as  
before, now peering between the legs of the grown-ups or lying on top



of each other. Center raft are FATHER-SIR and CHERUB ALVIN.

*Below, the montage of film continues. Close-up of a child reaching out for affection and being told to go watch television. A huge refugee camp, an old lady being knocked down, two youngsters running off with her purse, etc.*

*By now, the clouds of sparkle and color have grown. They continue to increase geometrically and there are ever-enlarging clouds of joy all over the earth, one especially in the New York area.*

FATHER-SIR

Before we open the prayer hatches, let us get out the viewer and take a closer look.

HENCHMAN AND OTHER ADULTS AND CHILDREN *wheel up a machine which has a few telescopes sticking out of it. Suddenly and miraculously, there are enough for everyone, even the children, and all at the right height.*

YOUNG MAN to OLD MAN

I've never seen this thing before. Father-Sir hasn't looked down there since I've been here.

OLD MAN

There haven't been any prayers of thanksgiving with volume enough to reach us. Anyway, Father-Sir doesn't have to look. He knows without looking.

YOUNG MAN

Then why all this?

OLD MAN

He wants us to see earth happiness, too.

*As they watch, heaven becomes obliterated as the whole screen fills with a scene rising up from England. A young couple, hand in hand, are climbing a mountain. The man stops, looks up as if to thank God. The girl lifts her face to the man, searching his eyes, then covering*

*his clasped hands with hers, she bows her head upon them in an attitude of prayer. She, too, looks up to the sky, very evidently thanking God.*

NARRATOR (FATHER-SIR)

A young man and a young woman have fallen in love.  
Nothing very new, except they seem to want to thank me  
for bringing them together. Refreshing, isn't it?

*The scene changes to the Scovel home in New York. Dr. Scovel is phoning the news, and Mrs. Scovel, writing it to someone.*

NARRATOR *as above*

The mother and father of the bride.

*As the news spreads, new puffs of color and light appear. Quick collage of people receiving the news.*

NARRATOR

The brother's family on Long Island  
And in Boston.

In Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The bride's sister in Saranac Lake.

The one in Florida.

A family friend in Vietnam.

Friends, neighbors, relatives; Oh, this  
is glorious. It is spreading all over the  
world; just look at England now! Open  
the prayer hatches and let this joy sweep  
through heaven like a cleansing wind. Open  
the prayer hatches! Then back to your heavenly  
castle for a celebration!

*All around the hatches have been opened. Color and sparkling rainbows shoot across the abyss of space like meteors. Earth is one huge fireworks display. Then heaven slowly begins to fill the entire screen.*

*The castle in the background stands in bright sunshine, its gold shining.*

*Alone in the center of the raft stand FATHER-SIR and CHERUB ALVIN.*

FATHER-SIR

*With an expansive filling of His "lungs"*  
Alvin, I haven't felt like this since . . .

CHERUB ALVIN

Since your Son came home?

FATHER-SIR

I wouldn't quite say that, but . . .

CHERUB ALVIN

But it feels a little bit like that way down inside and  
around the edges?

FATHER-SIR

Let's say it feels the way it did when you came home.

*FATHER-SIR slips an arm around CHERUB ALVIN's shoulder and they walk back toward the castle to join the celebration.*

*Slow FADE-OUT.*

END.

The article on "The Blessing of the Animals" had slipped to the floor, and with it my pride in my self-discipline. The deadline I had set for the complete outline and several sample chapters to be in the hands of Dorothy Weeks at Friendship Press was January 15. On the 17th I was to leave for a two-week speaking trip with the Florida Chain of Missions. A third

week, long looked forward to, would be spent with Vicki and her Jim at their home in Fort Myers.

Still, nothing could dampen those clouds of color, joy, and praise that kept mushrooming (forgive me, Father-Sir) through the hatches of heaven. And, hopefully, some of our joy *was* spilling over into the world around us. Perhaps we owed it to the world, as well as to heaven, to enjoy our happiness to the full.



# 5~

"I wish I could help you with Judy's wedding," said Vicki as we drove through the Florida night. The smell of the slowly moistening air, after the heat of the day, reminded me of Canton and Vicki's childhood. And the same soft, brown curl was falling over the same eye. She had driven to Winter Haven, a matter of hours, to meet me at the motel after my last speech. "So as not to waste a minute of our time together," she had said.

"Jim was sorry he couldn't be here to pick you up and to do the driving, but he's on the night shift at the satellite tracking station," she now told me. "He wants to take you through it someday while I'm at work. I hope you won't be bored stiff."

"I won't be bored at all; I want to see everything you're both doing. Is Jim still working with the sea scouts?"

"Yes, and he loves it. Wait till you see the ship."

She was quiet for a long time. Then she said, "Mom, I might as well tell you now. I don't think Jim will be able to come north for the wedding. He hasn't had this job long enough to have any vacation coming, and being new, he won't want to ask for any special favors."

"Let's not worry about that now," I told her. "Let's just

hope he'll make it. It's only February; we've got till December."

"They'll never wait till December. If I were you, I'd start getting ready now."

"I know you would. You're one of the organizers in the family. You had every detail of your own wedding planned—your dress bought, the date confirmed with the church and the two ministers, reservations made, guest list written out, menu chosen, and all before you left for your new job in Florida."

"We thought we'd have to change the date, remember? When I got to the florist's, he reminded me that I had chosen Mother's Day. I had to beg him to take on a wedding that day, too."

"It was a good day to be married, I thought."

"It's all right if it doesn't mark me for life, or something. I may turn out to be the old lady who lived in a shoe."

"I suppose I *should* be getting busy," I said. "You made all those arrangements in January and you weren't married until May."

"But I was only going to be home four days before my wedding. As it was, I left all the finishing up for you to do."

"It was nothing. I remember when it was all over, I said to your father, 'This wedding business and all the trouble it takes is highly overrated. I didn't have a thing to do except follow through on Vicki's plans.'

"Then I had another thought. 'Oh, Fred, what will I ever do when Judy gets married?' I asked him.

"'You'll get on the phone and call Vicki home,' he told me."

"And now," Vicki said, "I won't be there to do a thing. I'll be lucky if I can get away for the day of the wedding."

"Don't worry, honey; this is my one chance to do the preparations myself," I reminded her. "I felt a million miles away when Anne was married; then Carl. Of course we were back

in the States for Tom's and Jim's, but all I had to do for them was to dress up and attend. Do you realize this is the last wedding in the family?"

"How is Daddy going to take it?"

"I don't know. He really feels deserted when you girls leave him for another man. I hated to go away just at this time."

"You always hate to leave him, any time."

"I know. He doesn't eat when I'm away. That favorite stew will still be in the frig when I get home."

"Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Bob will have him over. And it'll only be a few days more. Oh, we've got so much planned. You haven't seen my radio and TV station, and tomorrow we're going to spend the whole day at the beach while Jim is working. Then on Sunday, I know you're tired and need the rest, but I want you to meet Henrietta. She's an awfully good friend, lives in Sarasota. It's a nice drive up there and Jim is going to take us all out for Chinese food, and"—The same irrepressible Vicki. How much I had missed her!—"and I want to take you to our lovely book store. I told them you'd autograph some books for them. I hope you don't mind."

We did it all. I met Vicki's friends, her co-workers at WINK, a CBS affiliate station; I read the scripts she wrote for advertising and marveled that my little girl was a very capable grown-up career woman. We ate Chinese food, a strawberry pie at a special restaurant, fried oysters at another, and Vicki's excellent cooking at home.

At Jim's tracking station, it was not the miracle of modern computing, but the record of achievement expected of *man* that stretched the convolutions of my brain. I had laughed when I read in our *Rockland County Times* the brief article on an award given by the Department of Defense to the nearby Suffern plant of Geigy Pharmaceuticals for a "zero defects" program.



"Isn't that ridiculous?" I'd said to Fred when I read it aloud to him. "How can a plant that big, with all those men in it, possibly have not one single defect? What do they mean by defects, anyway?"

Just what they said, I was now learning. Here where Jim worked and at every satellite tracking station in the system, performance by every man was expected to be 100 percent perfect. There were some sixteen of these stations, Jim told me, several in the United States, others in such places as the Malagasy Republic, Newfoundland, England, South Africa, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, and Australia.

"But Jim, isn't it a bit ridiculous to expect men to be *that* perfect?" I asked.

"Not at all, Mom," he replied. "In our last report, the top four stations *were* 100 percent perfect. That means they had no operator errors and no equipment malfunction. The next lower station was 99.99 percent perfect."

"What was the lowest?"

"The lowest on that particular report was 99.6, as I remember it, which is considered far too low."

"What was your rating here at Fort Myers?"

"I was afraid you'd ask that. Ours was 99.88 percent, which for us isn't good at all. Up to now we've run the highest, month on end. This time we had a piece of equipment break down."

"Well, they certainly can't blame you for *that*," I remonstrated.

"Oh yes they can. No matter how careful we are, if the equipment breaks down, it's our fault. We're supposed to have already noticed some evidence of slowing or malfunction."

"Aren't you men under terrific strain all the time?" I asked, still incredulous.

"Yes and no. It's a creative tension that keeps you alert and

interested and it certainly makes for a good *esprit de corps*. The team really wants to make the operation 100 percent perfect."

Driving to the radio station to pick up Vicki, I thought a lot about what these men were doing. My mind went back to December when Tom, Janene, and Derick had stopped at the house on their way back from Boston to Ann Arbor. While Tom attended a linguistics conference in New York, Janene and I had watched the successful completion of the Apollo 8 Mission. Small Derick, aged three, had explained it to his father when he returned. "The big balloon came down, down, down. Then they opened the door and three robots got out."

During the evening newscast, we had seen the team in Houston rejoicing over the successful outcome of their united effort. The three who had made the dangerous adventure outside the pull of earth's gravity were not robots; they were men. And though the room in Houston was filled with computers, men had had their hands upon the controls.

"The precision, the accuracy it must take by every single man of them!" Janene had exclaimed. "A mistake as small as a centimeter would have thrown the whole thing completely off and the astronauts would still be out there, floating around forever! Oh, it makes me shiver to even *think* of it!"

And here was Jim Harris in Florida, speaking of the men around the world with whom he worked, who *daily, hourly*, did a job that was 100 percent perfect! One could hardly expect this even in a country of trained technologists such as ours. But in Africa? In Latin America, which we condescendingly pictured as *Mañana Land*?

"Scientists tell us that the average person only uses about 5 percent of his potential," I said to Jim. "I think you men must be stretching far above average most of the time."

"It's quite a challenge," he replied.

I wondered what percent I was using. It was so easy to say, "Oh well, nobody can be perfect." I'd used the excuse all my life. Suddenly, I realized that Jesus must have meant exactly what he said when he gave his admonition. He did not say "Strive to be . . .," he said, "*Be* ye perfect."



6~

Fred met me at the airport, and I was so thrilled to see him I forgot, until I opened the front door, that we were having the whole interior of the house painted. Utter chaos greeted me. The painter, John Mulligan, was doing the front hall; my dear friend Gertrude was cleaning over and around the confusion of the contents of bookcases and clothes closets emptied into chairs, boxes, or piled on heaps on the floor.

I vaguely heard Fred say, "Your grandson, David, wants you to phone him."

"I can't stop now," I told him. Somehow I had to get that layer of what felt like scouring powder off of everything so I could unpack. Why, oh why had we planned to have the painting done while I was away? I had had my doubts of the wisdom of it in the first place. But I could see Fred's point. "The house isn't home when you're away," he had said, "and you know how I hate having things upset. Why not get both of them over at once? Then we'll be all settled and can start to live again as soon as you get back."

And we *were* all settled by the next evening. The house was so clean and beautiful, and I had been spared three weeks of what must have been horror to Fred. "You have me spoiled, completely," I said.

"Then I'd better get out the whip. You can start right back on your writing tomorrow morning."

We settled in to our evening reading; mine, the accumulation of letters.

"Have you called David?" Fred asked.

"I'll phone as soon as I've looked through this mail," I assured him and went off to bed, forgetting everything except how tired I was.

Next morning, I awoke with a start. Why was this nine-year-old telephoning me? Why not Anne or John? David must have called Fred. Why hadn't he just said, "Give Grandma my love," or something like that?

Fred was enigmatic when I asked him. "Better call him. I've been telling you that ever since you got home." How these men hung together! I dialed Saranac Lake as soon as I thought David would be out of bed.

"Hi, Grandma, do you know what?"

"No, what?" I asked impatiently.

"My mother is going to have a baby."

"She's *what*?" After nine long years of hoping for a larger family, could this be possible?

"She's pregnant," said David. "It's coming in August."

"David! That's so exciting! You certainly surprised me. And do you know what?"

"No, what?"

"That baby is certainly lucky to be having a wonderful big brother like you. Now please let me talk to your mother."

"Hi, Mom!" How happy her voice sounded. "David wanted to be the one to tell you. He takes the Sears catalogue to bed every night to see what I should be buying for the new baby." Such joy! Such blessed mother-daughter talk! "One way or another, I had to get in on this, your happiest summer," she went on, "even though it may mean I can't be there for any of it—not even for Judy's wedding,

not even for your fortieth anniversary celebration."

"This little one is worth missing a few festivities for, darling, and we'll all come to see you—one family at a time, I hope. And of course, I'll be there to help when he or she is born."

I thought of past telephone calls from John, his voice breaking as he told us that once more Anne was in the hospital, their hopes gone. Now, with the help of new drugs and new methods of treatment, fulfillment seemed assured.

"I'll get out my knitting needles right away," I told Anne. "What do you want me to make?"

She thought a moment. "A bed jacket, a pink bed jacket. I know it will take a lot longer than a baby sweater, but . . . do you mind?"

A bed jacket for herself; nothing for the baby. She was still unable to believe that this time she would really hold her child in her arms.

"I'd love to make a bed jacket for you," I assured her. "I'll do it of fine yarn in a lacy pattern." Love for her and prayers for the little one would be knit into every stitch.





7~

In a matter of weeks, our sparkling winter deteriorated into a dank March. A few piles of dirty snow sank disconsolately into the soggy ground; the rains were heavy, often turning to ice, the commuting dangerous. By night, Fred was too worn out to do more than read a few piles of materials brought home from the office, listen to the news (interrupted by bulletins on Eisenhower's condition), and crawl into bed.

One such evening, the telephone rang. It was Vicki and she was crying. "Just a minute, honey, I'll call your father," I said. Fred was already hurrying to the other telephone. Through her sobs we learned that her beloved kitten, Scamp, had died. Fred and I each sighed audibly with relief.

But that was not all. Vicki had been taken to the hospital, suffering extreme pain, which had been diagnosed as a gall bladder attack. "I'm only twenty-five, Daddy. Are the doctors right?" she asked. They were right. With medication the pain had gone and she'd been allowed to come home. That morning her kitten had died and Jim had buried it in their garden. Now he was at work on the night shift. She was alone and frightened.

As we comforted her, her sobbing quieted and she began to apologize for "being such a baby." Once more, I could be

grateful to God that we were not in India or China, unable to know about what was happening to our children until it was too late to do anything about it. The telephone was certainly an invention given to mothers by a loving God.

In less than a week, Vicki telephoned again. She had had another attack. It was over and the doctor had sent her home, this time to "pick up your nightgown and toothbrush and get back here as soon as you can." The operation was set for the next morning. Vicki was as calm as if she were headed for the supermarket for a loaf of bread. We spoke to Jim.

"Should we come?" I asked.

"I don't think we should ask you to do that so soon after you've been here," he replied, "not with air fare the way it is. Don't worry, Mom and Dad. The doctor assures us that everything will be all right."

"Jim, I'll come if you and Vicki feel you need me," I said. "There is always money enough to do what should be done."

"I'll call you as soon as everything is over," he told us. "We can tell more about it then. Just say a prayer for us and don't worry, hear?"

Don't worry. Futile words to a mother, though I knew with my mind that fretting was nothing but a lack of trust in God. Fred was always so much stronger than I at a time like this. "What good does it do?" he would ask. "Worry only wears you out. You may be needed." I knew it and I tried, but my too vivid imagination, plus my knowledge as a nurse, were thwarting me as usual. When a call came next evening, we hurried to our separate telephones.

But this time it was Dixie, the wife of our oldest son, Jim. He was in the hospital, hemorrhaging internally, having transfusions. The source of the bleeding had not been found, but the cause was almost certainly ulcers. That he had been in severe discomfort for some time, we knew. "The newspaperman's occupational hazard," he'd said lightly. He'd been un-

der the care of a specialist and was now in good hands, Dixie told us.

My whole body reacted like the whirring of a coiled spring. Fred's studied questions showed that he, too, was concerned about the seriousness of Jim's condition. I wondered if Dixie realized it. She was so brave, so dear. I wanted to reassure her, but I was so frightened I dared not speak. She told us about the wonderful neighbors who had helped to get Jim to the hospital and were now caring for the two little girls.

"Get all the sleep you can, Dixie," Fred told her. "We'll call you in the morning and we'll be thinking about you every minute." I may have murmured a good-night.

We went back to our chairs in the living room and sat across from each other in the dark. "I didn't even offer to help," I told Fred.

"There was nothing you could do," he replied. Dixie's mother was already on her way from Elmira, for which I was very glad. I also wondered whether or not I should go too. But as Fred pointed out, "If we go now, Dixie will have to get up and take care of us. Where would she put us, anyway?"

"Could we go to the hospital?"

"We wouldn't do Jim any good at this time of night."

But we'd be there if . . . I hadn't said it aloud and I wouldn't. Fred turned on the light and began to read. He would not permit himself to harbor any thoughts of what *might* happen. He was able to accept the moment and leave the hours in the hands of God.

"Is this the way tragedy comes to a family," I wondered, "in the midst of their greatest joys?" None of our children had ever been this ill since early childhood. Then, as doctor and nurse, at times the only ones available, we were too busy doing something about the situation to have time to consider our feelings. Now, overnight, Jim was in a hospital on Long Island and Vicki in one in Florida; and here we sat, doing

nothing, not knowing how they really were, unable to feel their pulses, or to look under their lower eyelids. For the first time in my motherhood I couldn't swing into action. I wasn't needed; I wasn't needed at all. I never realized before how hard it was to do nothing, to wait.

At last the telephone rang again and now I was afraid to answer it. The message was a healing reassurance. Vicki was in the recovery room, doing very well. No, I needn't come. It was just a question of convalescence. (Thank God; oh, thank you, God!) Vicki and Jim would be drawn closer for having braved this experience alone together. This might be true, too, for Jim and Dixie if . . . (Oh, God, what would she do with those two little girls if . . . ) The taut spring snapped. I flung myself into Fred's arms.

He held me close and let me cry, then said, "Come on, let's get to bed. Tomorrow is another day."

And it was! A clear, beautiful day! Fred phoned Jim's doctor and learned that the bleeding had almost stopped. Jim would have to remain in the hospital for several weeks; more transfusions and constant glucose were in the picture, but there was no immediate danger.

I called Dixie and told her I'd take Jessica, if that would help matters; but she thought, wisely, that Jessica would be better off in her own environment while this was going on. So I baked a ham and a dish of scalloped potatoes and fixed a dessert so Dixie and her mother wouldn't have quite so much cooking to do. We drove to the hospital to have lunch there with our tired but very brave daughter-in-law.

Jim was pale, much too pale, when we saw him during visiting hours, and so weak it was hard to hear his voice. But he hadn't lost his sense of humor. He sat up in bed, arranging his many long tubes, and said, "I didn't know there were so many strings attached to this deal. Dad, have you heard the one about the . . . ?" Same old Jim.



The radio alarm goes "Tsk!" and I agree wholeheartedly. I reach to turn it off before the early news slaps me in the face and awakens Fred. The daily ritual has begun: grope for the soft bathrobe the girls have been begging me to burn; fumble for slippers (why is one always under the desk?); careful not to hit the bed as I go around it—the poor man needs his sleep. (Those blasted, endless office folders every night!) "Careful on the stairs," I say to myself. "Take the sides of the two steps that creak; stop at the picture window in the living room to see what kind of a day it will be . . . too early to tell. Why am I up at this hour, anyway?"

Because I have learned that I cannot get along without this time alone. In the bright, yellow kitchen, day slowly seeps into me as I prepare for the sacrament of breakfast—a continuing celebration of thanksgiving for the release of our family from the internment camp in China during the Sino-Japanese War. After our experiences there, bread is more than bread. Warm toast and coffee become holy elements, never again to be accepted as a matter of course.

Today there are special prayers of thanksgiving for the

recovery of our two children. I read from Teilhard de Chardin's *Hymn of the Universe*, pick up the little red leather notebook, liking the feel of it, of anything leather. I remember my first such prayer list, a small address book, part of a green leather writing case Mother Scovel gave me before we sailed for China—the case I am still using. The first prayer list address book has long since worn out. It was a good tool for the discipline of starting a definite prayer time.

Strange, how inanimate things can suffuse a warmth into one's being, even kindle a spark of the divine. As I pray for the children and their children, their problems and their joys, I ask that each one may find in something they see or use, a warmth to lift this day above the commonplace. God will know best what gift to give each one—a flower in a favorite bud vase in just the right corner of the room, a pen with just the right balance, sunlight touching a loved painting—God will know.

I set aside the red leather notebook, wondering if prayer lists become walls that shut out what God would have me hear. So much of this hour is spent in telling God what He already knows. Concentrate now, on listening. Don't think a word, reach down deeper, deeper, as one does when writing a poem. I'm too tense; relax, let the Word flow in.

There are mornings when the kitchen is beautiful with The Holy Presence. This one starts out to be, but in too short a time I find myself cataloguing my worries again: God, I'll never get the Latin America book done and Phillda wants me to come in and look at pictures for it which would be fun if I didn't have so much else to do and there's the Pen Women meeting on Saturday and I can't possibly go but you know I must and it isn't fair to Fred on the one day he's home and there's all the Saturday housework and those curtains just *have* to be washed and the pink bed jacket won't be finished for Anne to wear in the

hospital unless I can sit down once in a while to knit and . . .

God, keep a clean wind blowing through my heart  
Night and day . . . .

Where did those lines come from? Grace Noll Crowell's poem. I let the lines wash through me like cleansing rain. How much her poems have meant to me over the years! Her "Prayer for Courage" I prayed daily, sometimes hourly, when we were in the internment camp and I knew our baby was coming:

God, make me brave for life,  
Oh, braver than this! . . . \*

If I could write just one poem that would help one person as much as Grace Noll Crowell has helped me!

I can't write anything if I am going to use my precious praying time shattering myself to fragments. I give this hour, with its wasted minutes, to God, as a child would lay a broken toy in his father's lap.

\*The quotations from Grace Noll Crowell's poems are from *Poems of Inspiration and Courage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 155 and 126. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row.

9~

It turned out to be a beautiful day, a touch of spring in the air. The writing went well, the washing dried on the line, Fred got home early.

"This is a nice surprise," I told him.

"I was able to leave on time for a change. Good thing. Elders' meeting tonight," he reminded me. My balloon fluffed and wilted. Wednesday again.

Well, I could do the ironing. I set up the board in the living room after he'd left and switched on the television. As usual, I broke into the middle of something, most of my TV watching being synchronized with the ironing. It was a CBS special called "The Time of Man." Someone, who I learned later was an anthropologist, was telling his experiences with the Ik tribe in northeastern Uganda. Nowhere did this scientist see any sign of love or affection—none at all between husband and wife, mother and child; no concern was shown for the ill or the elderly, so intent was each member on his own survival. The tribe was dying out. I gathered that the bleak environment had something to do with it. The telephone rang and that was all I heard of the program.

But it haunted me for weeks. "Which came first," I wondered, "the hostile environment or the lack of love? Or had



no longer caring *produced* the hostile environment?" One day, as I made the bed, it came to me in a flash that God had created the whole world so that the structure of it was built on caring. The process of conception depended upon the physical attraction of male and female. Love between humans only grew and flowered when he or she cared more about the fulfillment of the other than for his or her own fulfillment. Babies were born dependent upon their mother's love for care. If they were to grow up to be whole, healthy men and women, it was absolutely necessary for them to have someone near who loved them. As we grew older, we found we were lost without love, lonely without friends. We discovered that we were dependent upon one another—the city man upon the farmer, the farmer upon the city man; and as our technology increased, we became more and more dependent upon those men and women who programmed our computers, as they were upon us who provided the statistics. How we acted and reacted, what we thought of one another, determined the results.

I realized now, as never before, why God had put us in families. The young were dependent upon the old until the time came when the old were dependent upon the young. The strong had to care for the weak or they would die; the weak had to love and sustain the strong—the very dependence of the weak upon the strong raised them (the strong) to greater strength. God had first built into our beings this powerful psychological drive to be needed; then He had set us in families because they were little colonies for learning to care. Without this drive and the resultant caring, man would think only of his own survival and would thus perish. Witness the Iks. Why, we even had to love our rivers and trees or we would not survive!

The young of this generation had caught a glimpse of this reality. A beautiful Victorian-coiffed youth on a television program held that the hippie movement had failed because it

turned away from its theme of love, simplicity, and transparency to the self-indulgence of drugs. I remembered how thrilled we'd been when we first saw these young people turn from the accumulations of material things to simple living. "I give you a flower," they said, "nothing plastic; something real and living."

"Everyone here really cares," they said of their communal living. "Everyone here will listen to what I am saying."

"Look, this is a *door*," said one who had built himself a house blowtorched from the tops of junkheap cars. "I built this with my own hands; it opens and closes." The boy had never really seen a door before. Cooperation, pride of craftsmanship, abhorrence of useless, rusting accumulations, time to listen, time to care; what a Family of Man this generation could have built! Can still build!

"Suppose, just suppose," I thought one morning during prayer time, "that God has structured our spiritual world as He has our physical world. Suppose we are dependent upon one another for our spiritual survival—that if we don't care enough to pray for others, we ourselves will perish spiritually; that if we do not pray for those who do not pray, nothing good happens to them, so nothing good happens to the world, so nothing good happens to me! I must write this to the children in our Sunday letter. I'd like to get their reactions."

"And what about Vietnam?" I asked myself—I was always asking myself. "How does the need for love fit into this picture?"

"You can't just stand there loving without being blown to bits," said one side of me.

"I know, I know," said the other me. "But what about this terrible build-up of power that has snowballed till it seems to gather a momentum of its own, in spite of all we can do? Remember what that Russian said? 'It's already too late. The

build-up of power is now self-perpetuating. I am very discouraged.' ”

“Which of our nations would dare stop now?” the inner argument continued.

“Somebody has to take the risk, the terrible risk of believing in his fellow man.”

How far would this loving have to go in order for us to survive? Perhaps all the way to a trusting vulnerability—as one has to trust in love in a family.

AGAINST ALL TOO-LARGE FEARS  
(For Arthur Judson Brown)

"When I was young," the old man said,  
"I lived in fear of mastodons,  
of pterodactyls, brontosaurus  
and all horrendous beasts  
that roamed the earth  
those many years ago.

"My childhood dreams  
were nightmares  
of the monsters who'd have been  
fiercer by far than these  
and larger  
to have made them disappear  
from off the earth.

"And then I learned  
that all it really took  
was just a change of climate."



# 10~

As I slid a pan of cranberry bread into the oven, I heard the car come in. It would be hard to imagine what life would be like without the love of the man now slamming the garage door. I was the luckiest woman in the world. Who else could waken in the morning, having overslept, and find on the floor beside her bed some such note as "Breakfast and the first iris await"?

"Did you finish your chapter?" he asked as he took off his coat and began to sort the contents of his briefcase.

"I did, at last. And I celebrated by watching the Mike Douglas Show, so I finished the ironing, too."

"Anything interesting?"

"Dr. Joyce Brothers was asking the other performers what animal they'd choose to be. Then she'd read their characters from their choices. If you had your choice, what kind of an animal would you like to be?"

"Well, let's see, I wouldn't want to chase or kill, or be chased and killed, so I suppose I'd be herbivorous. I don't know, though, a whale leads an interesting life."

"So you'd be a whale. I might have known, with your love of the sea."

"A whale or an elephant. An elephant might be fun. I'd have to think about it. What would you choose to be?"

"An otter," I told him. "I decided this afternoon."

"What in the world would make you want to be an otter?"

"Otters fit into the scheme of nature. They do all the things they should do as an animal, take all their responsibilities, but they have a lot of fun doing it. They never walk down a hill when they can slide. Snow, for them, is to play in; waterfalls are to enjoy physically, not just to walk past. When other animals are going around with their noses to the ground, intent on survival, otters decide to go for a swim. If they get hungry, they play hide-and-seek with a fish."

"What would you like least to be?" Fred wanted to know.

"A dog."

"So you don't want to be man's best friend."

"*One* man's best friend, yes. But that's the trouble with dogs. If I'm going to be an animal, I want to be a real *animal*. Man has taken all that away from the dog—his pure 'dogism' is gone. Maybe dogs are the Uncle Toms of the animal kingdom."

"What do you mean by that?"

"If any baby-talking dowager asked me to sit up on my hind legs and beg for a chocolate drop which I didn't want in the first place, I'd take her whole hand with it. An otter would never allow itself to be dressed in a tuxedo and made to attend the second wedding of its mistress."

"Where did you pick that one up?"

"On one of my TV mini-segments. I've even decided to make my own horoscope. The rest of this year will be called The Year of the Otter—the year to enjoy everything as it comes along."

We hadn't progressed very far into the serendipitous Year of the Otter when a letter arrived from our son-in-law-to-be.

In my excitement I ripped the British air form in two. John gave so much of himself in his letters, we already felt we knew him; and his warm acceptance of us, whom he had never met, brought him all the closer.

"Dear Mom and Dad," he began. (Evidently, the old saying, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip" hadn't entered his mind.) But wait!

"Since I wrote you last, I've changed my mind about marrying Judy." *What?* "I don't want to marry her at Christmas, I want to marry her this summer . . ."

I let Fred read it and gasp, then I said, "It looks as if we are to have one more joker in the Scovel family. But I know just what I'm going to write to that young man. 'Dear John, Dr. Scovel and I have *not* changed our minds about your marrying our daughter. We have known all along that you wouldn't wait until December.' "

We were, then, all agreed . . . except Judy.





# 11~

I, of all people, should have realized that we were moving in on Judy too fast. She was in the midst of a piece of writing which had to be worked into her heavy teaching schedule, play rehearsals, choir rehearsals, engagement parties in her honor, and now a switch of plans. There would be no long summer quietly at home, no trips to visit her friends across the country, no Christmas wedding, just one more pell-mell rush, this time into marriage.

"Mom, you will notice it's my childhood coming back," she wrote. "As soon as people start pushing me, I suddenly turn off." I could see that stodgy little figure, standing in the middle of the street in some foreign city, refusing to take another step because we had tried to hurry her along; or slowing her pace in dressing because I had said, "We'll be late for church." Our tensions seemed to paralyze her.

"What complications there are in life," her letter continued. "I think back to the times when you read us fairy tales that ended, 'The prince asked her to marry him and they lived happily ever after.' Children shouldn't be allowed to hear such rubbish! It warps their minds."

"Why can't it be that way?" I asked myself. "It's ridiculous the lengths to which we go to keep this day from being the

happiest day in a girl's life." But the rest of her letter was full of her lifelong dreams of having the traditional wedding. "And now, I guess I'll just have to find a justice of the peace and not bother about anything," she wrote. "I'll go down tomorrow and tell the tailor to stop making my wedding dress. It's a winter one."

Though I recognized "dramatics" when I saw it, by the time Fred got home I was in a dither, having mulled over the contents of her letter the entire day. Fred was unimpressed by Judy's rehearsal of her woes and even less by mine.

"But what shall we *do*?" I asked him.

"Wait till you get her next letter," he advised.

"And just not even *write* her or *help* her or *anything*?"

"Go ahead, write her if you want to," he said, then muttered something that sounded like "It will calm *you* down at least."

I was already too upset to press the matter further—so upset that I waited until after I had had devotions the next day. Then I wrote, "The only thing that is important about this wedding is that you and John make your vows before God and become man and wife. You can do that in a garden, on top of the Empire State Building, in the Stony Point Presbyterian Church, in your chapel in India, or swimming the Hellespont. Do go ahead with the wedding dress if it is what you really want to wear; summers aren't all that hot here. It might be difficult to swim in if you choose the Hellespont. I like your choice of hand-woven Indian silk and the material for the bridesmaids' dresses sounds beautiful. You'll have plenty of time to make them when you get home.

"If you plan on getting here June 8, and if you still want a late July wedding, we'd have almost six weeks to prepare. I've already gone through this once, having carried out Vicki's plans, and I'll be helping your Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Bob

a little with Betsy's wedding on June 21, so yours won't be any trouble at all."

The rest of the letter asked about the anticipated number of guests and so forth. Fred was right, as usual; writing the letter had done me a world of good.

And, of course, he was right about Judy's reactions. (Such a maddening man to live with!) The next mail brought another letter written later the same day as her woeful one:

"I'm so excited about the possibility of this plan working, I can hardly stand it. As you know, the problem has to do with having enough time to get ready. . . ." She then outlined a schedule of events which included an earlier arrival of John from England and even a month's honeymoon in the United States! Her ending was one to keep for her children to find in the attic, tied in the bundle with the faded pink ribbon:

"Oh, I'm so excited I can't bear it! Just imagine really being married so soon! And I can be at Betsy's wedding, too! Oh, I love you! The world is so beautiful! Just imagine, *REALLY married!* All of a sudden it dawned on me what this means! How can life be so beautiful? Oh, my dear parents, thank you so much for the life you have given me!"

After Fred had read the letter, we held each other a little closer, thanking God for the privilege of being parents, of being allowed to share the joys (and the woes!) of our children. And, once more, I forgave him for being right.

## 12~

If Judy was to arrive on June 8, the book must be completed and out of my hair by the first week in May, since we planned a short vacation in Canada before her coming. Today was April 24! And there were still the comments of the Friendship Press Children's Committee to consider, incorporate, or discard. But the writing had moved along in spite of all the excitement. It was time, now, to spend a day at the Interchurch Center in New York. I could drive in with Fred and his car pool.

Phillda Ragland was doing the photographs for this picture book for six-to-nine-year-olds. She had asked me to come in to look over those she had selected to go with the manuscript. And Dorothy Weeks, Children's Editor of Friendship Press (located in the same building), wanted to discuss titles. Dorothy had commissioned me to write the book.

It was a fun day, a relief from the discipline of making myself write, yet without the guilt of feeling I was neglecting my duty. The photographs of children which Phillda had gathered were delightful, especially those she had taken herself in South America. Since the book was on the theme, "The Americas, How Many Worlds?", she had also chosen pictures from Canada, and one of a dear little Navajo girl, holding a

lamb—"just right for the section on pets," I told her.

"Or for the double-page spread of children telling where they live," she suggested.

"This is my favorite." I held up a photograph of a black American child, dreaming of far-off things. "Can we put her on the page with the poems?"

The book was taking shape before our eyes and we were getting more and more excited.

"I'm still disappointed that we can't have a round book," said Phillda. We had let our imaginations run during the planning stages—a round book with lots of color, heavy cardboard pages, two holes at the top, a long shoelace to tie the pages together. Then the child could string the book across a corner of the room, or lay the pages out on the floor, or remake the book in any order he or she chose. But alas, ideas cost money, and our dreams, if produced, would have priced the book too high for the Friendship Press market.

Our editors had been as disappointed as we. "But you can imagine the problems such a book would have presented to librarians," said associate editor Mary O'Hara.

"Anyway, no one can take away from us the fun we had dreaming together," I told Phillda as we gathered up the photographs to take down to Friendship Press.

Driving home that night, the car pool wanted to know how things had gone, so I told them all about it. "And guess what we are going to use for the authors' photo at the back? *Ebony Magazine* has given us permission to use one of the pictures they took of an article on Phillda."

"Why *Ebony*?" someone asked from the back seat.

"Because Phillda is an outstanding young Negro, and a *very* photogenic one besides," I replied.

"I didn't know she was black. Why didn't you tell us?" asked one of the riders.

"I suppose you never think of her as being black," said another.

"I certainly never think of her as being white," I replied. "Her being black is part of her being Phillda, one of the loveliest people I know."

"She isn't really black, any more than you are really white. I'll be glad when this whole thing gets settled so we can stop talking and thinking about a person's color. By the way, how come *you* got into *Ebony*?"

Fred broke in with "Isn't that something? We're so proud of her. One of the boys who works on my old floor came into the office the day the magazine came out and said, 'Dr. Scovel, I see your wife made *Ebony*! Congratulations!'"

"Only because of Phillda," I told them. "She wanted to be sure our book was in the article, so she asked me to come in when the *Ebony* photographer was shooting her at work in the United Presbyterian Overseas Communications Office. He got a wonderful shot of Phillda and me working on layout with Mary O'Hara, and that's the one we'll be having on the book."

"Did you get a title for it?" asked Fred.

"Yes, we did some brainstorming and came up with *Don't Just Sit There Reading*, since it's a Fun-To-Do workbook type of thing."

"Not bad," said Fred. "I think children will like it and want to pick it up to see what's inside. What else did you do all day?"

That *was* another story. Fred and I were always having conversation adventures with strangers and we liked to share them with each other. This one was with a young student. Conversations had resumed on the back seat, so I could tell it to Fred in a low voice . . .

# 13~

After finishing with Phillda, I decided on a cup of coffee before going downtown for shopping. I had stopped at the Chock Full O'Nuts across from the entrance of Columbia University where I would take the subway. The place was full of students whom I always enjoyed watching. There were the usual long-haired, dirty-jeaned few who made me smile and weep inwardly at the same time. If ever there was a perfect picture of a child crying out for his mother's attention, this was it. When did a mother notice her child more than any other time? When he was dirty. "Go wash your hands." "Clean off those shoes before you come in here." "Change your shirt before you leave this house?" And when could a child be absolutely *sure* his mother would notice him? When he needed a haircut, if he were a boy; when her bangs fell over her eyes, if she were a girl.

"Someday I'm going to have the courage to put my arms around the least suspecting of these kids," I told myself. "I'm going to say, 'We love you, we really do.'"

Tempted, I turned to the young man next to me, but he was much too clean and his hair, though long, was fashionably cut. To save the management from obtaining a strait jacket and an ambulance, I restrained myself from looking further. I noticed



that the boy next to me was reading a book about Mao Tse-tung.

Two empty seats across the counter were being filled by a Chinese boy and an American friend. Once more I was thankful for a sense of hearing that made me eligible for the Best-Eavesdropper-of-the-Year award. The two noticed the Mao Tse-tung book at once. This was going to be fun.

"What do you think of that?" asked the American.

"Not much," the Chinese boy replied with a smile.

"Why don't you tell him?" asked the American.

"Aw . . ." Then, with a deprecating, what-good-would-it-do gesture, the Chinese boy quickly changed the subject to the book *he* was carrying.

Should I or shouldn't I tell the hippie what I thought about the book he was reading? Terrible word, "hippie." I avoided the encounter by trying to think of a better word and came up with "bippy," *bright, intelligent, personable (if peculiar)* youth. Such a man deserved to know.

"I lived in China under his regime for a year and a half," I began, pointing to the photo of Chairman Mao on the cover.

"What was it like?" he asked.

"We'd been living there for almost twenty years before the Communists took our part of the country, Canton. The first thing we noticed was that the wonderful sense of humor had disappeared overnight. All their clever wit and repartee, their ability to . . . well, to not take themselves too seriously, was gone. The Chinese are wonderful people to be with. Then, the second thing we noticed, and that happened just as quickly, was the disappearance of all creative art."

"Why?"

"A man is afraid to joke or paint for fear what he says or does will be held against him. One must tread softly in expressing even the simplest ideas, lest what he say be used against him."

"At least they all had something to eat, at last."

"Did they?"

"Didn't they?"

I didn't want to antagonize him. He was such an interested, eager young man. "Well, no; you see, there was an austerity program in which all were asked to cooperate, and did. It was badly needed to put the economy back on its feet, but it was hard on some of the people."

I noticed how gentle he was in asking the questions, switching the subject just a degree to avoid antagonizing me and so get his answers. "At least, Chiang Kai-shek owes his life to the Communists," he said.

"I never thought of it that way before," I said, and we both laughed. "I remember very well the Christmas they kidnaped him, Generalissimonaped, I suppose I should say."

We talked for some time while we drank our coffee and on the street corner outside after we'd finished. I tried to tell him that living under communism wasn't as simple as it appeared from reading books about it. The Chinese were people, like us, with brains, creative thoughts, ideas of their own. Some of them liked the regime under which they lived; some of them didn't.

"Like us," he said.

"But without the privilege of protest," I added. "You'd have to shave your head and wear only black or gray, drab uniformlike pants and jacket."

He smiled ruefully. "It's been nice talking to you."

"I've enjoyed it, too."

All the way downtown on the subway, I pondered the so-called generation gap. These were such wonderful young people, so concerned, so frustrated at not being able to right the wrongs so evident to them. How would I like to spend my youth batting my head against stone walls?

How different from even our earliest days as medical mis-

sionaries in China! We had had our frustrations at things not changing fast enough to suit us. But as a doctor among those who had little or no medical attention, Fred could at least go to bed each night with the knowledge that he had made a few people more comfortable, more hopeful than they would have been without him. Everything he did, counted.

And, as a family, we had been in this together. Each one of us was needed to keep the rest of us going. No one was spared, not even the children. The thought had added to the density of my darkest hours, but I knew that this was an adventure for God and that since it was that, in all faith, however inadequate the results, He would see us through.

Perhaps these young people had been spared too much. Had their parents shared with them their own anxieties, their own problems? Were family problems really family problems or were these, too, kept from the children? One of my own failures was that I tried to keep my children from knowing that I was not brave. I let them go off to school, to college, out into life, thinking that the smile I wore as the train pulled out was the smile I wore when I got home and started to pick up their clothes.

"If I had it to do over again, I'd bawl like a baby," I told myself. To be spared the dangers, the anxieties, and the tears of the family was to be pushed outside the circle of being needed. As Jim once said when he was thirteen, "The pioneers didn't leave their children behind in comfortable old New England."

In the pioneer family, each child *knew* he was needed—that the farm couldn't be the farm it was without him. A son worked beside his father. When the day came and a decision was made that the son should go off to college, the son *knew* first-hand what a sacrifice this would be for his father. He had an incentive to do well in school, to earn enough to make it up to his father.

In today's society the child knew he was *not* needed—that in many instances there wasn't even a place for him in the house. No wonder these young people turned to causes. And if no cause appeared, there was no other course than to create one, since it was apparent that they were not needed anywhere else.

Fred and I were still talking about it when we arrived home, and we continued to do so off and on all evening. "I want to climb up on a stalled truck and shout to these children, 'God needs you. God wants you. He's been looking all over for you. Where have you been? He has an adventure waiting for you that will be more exciting than anything you've ever done,'" I told Fred.

"They'll tell you that God is dead, or on a vacation. Then what will you say?"

"I'll say, 'Don't tell me there isn't a God. You don't know that. Either there is a God or there isn't; you have a fifty-fifty chance of being right whichever way you choose. Look around. Who are the truly beautiful people? Those who not only believe, but who will risk everything, even their precious accumulations of things, to start out on an adventure for Him. Think of it, you don't ever have to be lonely or unwanted again.'"

"They wouldn't listen to you, would they?" Fred asked. "You're the 'establishment,' remember?"

"I only said I wanted to say it; I didn't say I would. But maybe I should. It's just a shame that so many of these kids are missing all the fun. How can they get through life without Someone to depend upon; without Someone to pray to?"

"They can go to India and learn how to meditate," said Fred, "and if that isn't a commentary on our failure, I'd like to know what is. We haven't even given them the basic principles."

“SO IS EVERYONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT”

“Where does the wind come from, Nicodemus?”

“Rabbi, I do not know.”

“Nor can you tell where it will go.

“Put yourself into the path of the wind,  
Nicodemus.

You will be borne along  
by something greater than yourself.  
You are proud of your position,  
content in your security,  
but you will perish in such stagnant air.

“Put yourself into the path of the wind.  
Bright leaves will dance before you.  
You will find yourself in places  
you never dreamed of going;  
you will be forced into situations  
you have dreaded  
and find them like a coming home.

“You will have a power you never had before,  
Nicodemus.

You will be a new man.

Put yourself into the path of the wind.”

# 14~

The book, *Don't Just Sit There Reading*, was accepted by Friendship Press on May 7. We had followed our usual custom of holding a short service of the dedication of the manuscript on the night Carl arrived from Boston, when our pastor and his wife were with us. It took me back to the first such dedication we had ever had, before sending out *The Chinese Ginger Jars*. It is a fearful thing to send a book out into the world. For better or for worse, it will have some impact on someone. I knew I would feel better about it if I gave it all into the hands of God to do with as He knew best.

The service had been held in our living room in Ludhiana, North India, where the book had been written. Only four of us were present, our Indian pastor Amos Boyd and his wife, Fred and I. We had no idea what such a service would be like, but we knew the planning of it was in good hands if we left it up to Amos.

First, he placed on the long table the wooden cross we had used for family worship when the children were at home. Then he took the manuscript from its envelope, arranged the chapters in two piles in front of the cross, and knelt before them, laying a hand on each pile. Quietly, he poured out his soul in blessing upon the author and her work. He prayed for

those who would read the book, for every home into which the book would go, for every individual to whom it might have some particular message. I could not help smiling as he prayed in complete confidence, not only for the publishers, but for the typesetters, printers, and proofreaders. He had far more assurance than I had at the ultimate publication of the book. During the days when it finally was going through the process of printing, I often thought of the typesetters, printers, and proofreaders for whom Amos had prayed six years earlier.

As I worked on the backlog of letters and cleared away the piles of research materials, I knew I would miss working in this room for the next few months. But since I couldn't be two people, there was not the slightest doubt which "me" I'd choose to be—writer or mother. The two "me's" had rarely conflicted. I hadn't written more than a few poems before the children went away to school, and since then, by planning and hard labor, I'd been able to arrange schedules to fit deadlines. This summer was going to be the high point of my motherhood. Surely, seeing the last child launched on her own career as a wife was some sort of a landmark.

I had certainly enjoyed every stage of my motherhood. When the children were babies, I knew that that must be the best time in my life with them, but things got even better as they grew older. Being a mother had been hard work, too; fearful work: Had what I said to him warped him for the rest of his life? Had losing my temper alienated us permanently? Had I helped her enough in planning her life, or had I tried too hard to let her do it herself?

I comforted myself by remembering that the children had a lot of wonderful genes in their bodies, plus the best father in the world. Too, people with whom they would have to deal when they grew up were not perfect either. Children also learned from mothers what *not* to do.

For better or for worse, whatever I had or had not done to their characters had long since been done or had not been done. This summer I could revel in the *fun* of being a mother without worrying about any of its problems.

The workroom was beginning to look bare. I'd almost forgotten what the wood on the long table was like underneath those piles of papers. This room was one more evidence of Fred's understanding, of his freeing me to be myself. It was he who had urged me to stop working at the United Presbyterian Office of Communications in New York, knowing full well what the loss of my salary would mean to our family finances.

"You are the only person who can write what you have to write," he had said. "There will be others to get out *Current News of the Church Overseas*." He had painted walls and woodwork and refinished the floor of my workroom to surprise me when I was off on a speaking engagement. The room was so perfect, I had been afraid I would never be able to write in it, having moved from a corner of the bedroom where nothing could be left out overnight, where files were in the clothes closet or two flights down in the basement. I had heard of people who could not write when the situation suddenly became ideal. But it was not so with me. I could and did spend five or six hours each day in this room without realizing the passage of time.

And I could never thank Fred enough for seeing, before I did, my need to clear away the clutter of commuting, constant interruption, and the plethora of trivial ideas. At my age, one felt the necessity for zeroing in on a few priorities. I couldn't hope for much more than another thirty years—a short time to bring to fruition the plans already brewing. Certainly I had never been happier than I was now.

"If all men were like Fred, there would be no need for women's liberation movements," I said to myself. Immedi-



ately, my thoughts flew to a dear friend who gave up writing excellent poetry because her husband laughed at her and told her not to waste her time. Couldn't the man realize that housekeeping alone wasn't a challenge any more? Again I thought of the pioneers and the need to be needed.

Pioneer women, married or single, never had to worry about feeling unimportant. They knew very well how much they were needed. They planted their kitchen gardens, canned the vegetables and fruit for the winter; carded and spun and wove the wool for clothing; healed the sick, cared for the elderly and the poor in the neighborhood, and still found time to keep a family journal, write a Christmas poem, compose a lullaby, or indulge their artistic talents in an original pattern for a velvet coverlet or a cotton quilt.

"Today, a woman can be gone two weeks and no calf will die," I thought. "Her man will eat three meals a day, using the nearby restaurants or by heating frozen foods. His clothes can be washed at a laundromat or dropped off at a laundry on his way to work or he can rinse out the drip-dries himself. There is only one thing a woman can do for her man that technology cannot do."

It was no wonder the ads portrayed her in the only way she *knew* she was needed. "But sex alone isn't enough for a woman who has to live twenty-four hours each day," I said to myself. "Childbearing can be completely fulfilling, but those years are so few in the long span of life. And I don't think sex alone is enough for a man, either. And he can get very bored at hearing that the clothes didn't get dry and that the baby spat out her spinach. I think he wants a woman who is interesting and fulfilled and creative and it's about time he got around to seeing that all women, married or single, had an equal opportunity to live that kind of a life."

It would do no good to talk to Fred about it. Nothing in the world would convince him that all husbands were not exactly

as he was. "How can you say they aren't?" he would ask. "How many men have you been married to?" Uh! Men!

"If woman has to find her way alone, what can she do?" I wondered. I knew. I had learned that there was only one way—to be still and *know* that God would guide her every step of the way. Otherwise, she would spread herself too thin over the many needs with which she was faced, at home and in her world. "Her role has always been to bring order out of chaos," I thought. "To fill this role, she has had to keep herself open to God's new horizons, to walk hand in hand with the Creator who understands her—another creator." Order out of chaos, peace out of turmoil; woman, the healer, the neighbor, the caring one . . .

I thought I had done that file. I had better stop philosophizing and finish the work in this study. I still had to pack for the trip to Canada. But it was wonderful to let my thoughts run on and on and not have to pull them back to the book that had to be written. When Judy came, we could sit and talk and talk and talk.

# 15~

Our visit to Canada was for a particular purpose—to meet my mother's relatives whom I had never seen and to learn more about my ancestors on her side of the family. We knew about the Scovels, the Baron de Scoville, "1066 and all that," and the early arrival in Connecticut of the Scovilles, Scovils, Scovels. We knew about Fred's mother's family—the Gilmans, who owned the foundry which made the beautiful curlicue iron frames for mirrors; the Kiehles, who were all preachers and educators except Uncle Al. He would have made a fortune as a television comedian had he not been born before his time.

We even knew a little about the Scotts, in spite of my father's refusal to impart the knowledge when we asked. "You are *you*," he would say. "All this snobbishness about ancestors will get you nowhere. It's what you make of yourself that counts."

From his sister, our Aunt Nell, we had learned about our great-grandfather, a Scot as well as a Scott, "related to Sir Walter, himself"; and our grandfather, Charles Cauthrew Scott. ("Cauthrew?" "Yes, Cauthrew.") Born in Essex, he had "made eight trips back and forth from England before he was twelve years old." His wife, my Irish grandmother, Charlotte

Mary Curran, I saw once and loved forever after. But the ancestors who intrigued us most were *her* grandmother, an "Italian countess, born in Genoa," and the dashing young sea captain, our great-great-grandfather, who had "run off with her to England."

"Why, as we grow older, do we reach back into our past for roots?" I wondered as I packed the square gray suitcase that looked small but held everything. "African children grow up in an atmosphere of this larger family of the living, and of the dead who are not dead to them. They are either good people to be called on in time of need, or evil people to fear."

I had no evil ones to fear because in our culture the dead were cut off from us; they were not with us but on "the other side." And anyway, in our culture, the moment a person died, he became at once the person we had always wanted him to be; only the good that men do lives after them, Mr. Shakespeare. If a horse thief is mentioned, he was a whimsical horse thief, at worst.

It had only been within the past few years that I had begun to search for my roots. Now I wanted to know the names of my ancestors, to hear stories about them, to see the places where they had lived, to see where my mother had been born. I wanted to pass on to our children this part of their past. And Fred was as interested as I was.

After driving through a countryside white with trillium, we found the small village of Verona, Ontario, and the General Store kept by our cousins, Verdun and Dorothy Walker. Dorothy had been a Wilkins, the family of my mother's mother, Jane Anne Wilkins, who married my grandfather, George Fox. There was a moment of strangeness as I saw Dorothy come down the aisle of the store to meet us; less than a moment, really. Then I knew I had come home. "Blood is thicker than water," my mother had often said. I knew she was right

as we were taken into the heart of her family.

Why had I pictured them all as being old? Cousin Alice Sigsworth Daw arrived in a most becoming not-too-mini skirt; her sister, Phyllis, and husband, Richard Wells, drove miles to spend a few hours; Cousin Warren Wilkins, the doctor, and his wife dropped in unexpectedly. Mother had been so proud of his father, also Dr. Wilkins. She had always wanted me to go to Coburg to see him but he had died, before I ever got around to it. Now I wished I had.

What an Old Home Week! We were welcomed, not as long lost relatives, but as those who had never been away. Dorothy drove me out to the farm of Cousin Harry Sutton, "aged eighty-six." The beautiful stone farmhouse was closed and locked. We looked into windows and saw the lovely old family furniture, but no Cousin Harry. From a neighbor we learned that he was in the hospital, having suffered a heart attack, but was now convalescing. Off we went to see him there.

"Does the name Myrtle Fox mean anything to you?" I asked after Dorothy had introduced us.

"Well, I should say it does!" he said, sitting up in bed and swinging his legs over the side. Mother had often spoken of Cousin Harry's eyes, "the bluest eyes I ever saw."

"I'm Myrtle's daughter," I told him.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "Myrtle's daughter! Oh, she was a beautiful girl—golden hair, she had. Her sister, Geneva, we called her Jennie, had the prettiest laugh I ever heard."

It would be fun to tell this to Aunt Jen and Uncle Lou when we stopped at the retirement home to see them.

Cousin Harry talked of beautiful days, of children running through fields of wild flowers, of laughter; then of harsh tragedy when their mother, Grandmother Jane Wilkins, died. My mother was eleven years old at the time. The family was separated, some not to meet again until they were adults with families of their own. I well remembered the black-haired

stranger who came to our back door and the shock of seeing my mother throw her arms around him and kiss him. Thus were we introduced to our Uncle Will!

We called on Cousin Margaret in her lovely farmhouse surrounded by green lawns, then went to the old home where Uncle Joe, the oldest (and only) boy, had kept open house for the rest of the family. My mother had been in and out of this house as a young child. Uncle Joe was also Dorothy's grandfather, of course. By now I was so caught up in the past, it was hard to think that we two cousins, Dorothy and I, were not really going to run across the lawn in crisp white dresses, pink ribbons slipping from our braids in our haste to join Uncle Joe's large family for Sunday dinner.

One afternoon, while Verdun took Fred to see a quarry of feldspar, Dorothy drove me out into the country where we searched for and found the site of the log cabin where Thomas Wilkin (the "s" was added about 1900) had lived with his wife, Margaret. He had settled in Canada in 1839, after his earlier life at sea. Thomas is said to have worn "a beard that came down to his navel." What strange sentences history chooses to record!

Thomas' father was Billy Wilkin, a lace manufacturer from Armagh County, North Ireland. A Protestant, he had been stoned to death by Catholics when he made his annual trip into Belfast, bringing his lace to be sold. Dorothy told me about it as we stood on the site of the old homestead.

"But Dorothy, that was how many years ago?"

"About a hundred and fifty," she said sadly.

"And we are still doing this to each other on that very spot today? Don't we ever learn anything?"

We got into the car and drove back to Verona; I, wondering what the genes of Billy, Thomas, and Jane Wilkins had done to the pattern of my life; wondering, too, what they had built into the lives of our children, these strong, persisting men, this

valiant woman. What would they bring into the lives of the children of John and Judy?

With a great inner leap of joy, I realized that it was only a matter of weeks now, not years or even months, before we would be seeing our daughter. Ahead was all the fun of preparing for her wedding! "If you had anything at all to do with this moment, thank you, thank you, thank you, Billy Wilkin, Thomas, and Grandmother Jane," I told them, speaking to my ancestors as any African might have done.





# 16~

The morning of June 8 actually came! I took one last look around the house before leaving for the airport, seeing it as Judy would see it when she first walked in. All the old familiar things were in the old familiar places. "Fred, don't forget to let her out at the front door," I told him. "She always liked to come in that way when the roses were in bloom."

"You women!" He smiled indulgently, took me by the elbow to the car, and we were off.

"Suppose the car should break down! Suppose she has missed the plane!"

"You think of the cheeriest things," said Fred.

"I wonder what she'll be wearing when she comes."

"You won't even see what she's wearing."

"I even remember what she wore when she arrived from the six-day war in Egypt."

She had bought a new white belted-in raincoat. "I've decided to be a missionary detective," she had told us. "You can call me Martin Sleuther."

"Same old nut," her father had said as he hugged her.

"If that plane doesn't arrive on time, I shall die," I said to Fred.

"I will, too," he admitted.

The plane was late; we both lived. At last, she was in our arms, tired from the air travel from India, worn out from the added journey into the interior of Egypt to see her friends there and to pick up the things left behind during the hurried evacuation, but home, home. "I never want to go anywhere again, ever," she said.

In the excitement of Judy's arrival, Fred and I had all but forgotten that within the week we would reach our fortieth wedding anniversary. "Let's wait until this is over and do something special, like go on a honeymoon ourselves," he suggested.

"Oh, yes," I agreed. "For *this* anniversary, we must go off somewhere and be alone. With everything going on here now, I can only pass you in the hall. I feel as if you were a thousand miles away."

"It may seem funny having the day just come and go," he said. "Are you sure you won't want to go out to dinner, or something?"

"I don't think so. It's such a big day in our lives. I wish the children could all be here for it, but it would be ridiculous to have them make the long trips when they're coming six days later for Betsy's wedding. We'll do our celebrating when everything settles down, as you suggested."

"And we'll have Judy here for the day itself," said Fred triumphantly.

What a day it turned out to be! Judy had a delicious breakfast ready when we came downstairs. Being Sunday, we sat at the table for some time, then Fred glanced at his watch. "Time for my Sunday-school class," he said.

"Don't go today," said Judy.

"Have to; I'm the teacher," said her father as he stretched his long legs to rise.

"You just cannot go yet," she said firmly.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because it's a very special day, that's why." The words were hardly out of her mouth before the telephone rang; she tore to the kitchen to answer it.

"You'll have to wait another half hour," she said when she returned. "What time do you actually *have* to be there?"

"Nine-thirty."

"Well, you have plenty of time. It's nine now and you'll only be a few minutes late getting there."

"I'll phone Ruth Donato and let her know," said Fred. Having lived through twenty-seven years of Judy's and the other children's very special surprises, we knew better than to ask questions. Before Fred could become too fidgety, we heard the ring and ran to the telephones.

It was the voice of our oldest son, Jim, then his wife, Dixie. Wasn't that Carl? Yes, it was Carl and Faith, too. The four of them were on the line. And Anne? There was no mistaking that peal of laughter. And her John, having to rush off to preach. Yes, Tom, too, and Janene; then Vicki and her Jim in Florida. By now we were all talking at once, laughing, being teased about how old we were; being complimented on how young we were, shedding a few happy tears. Fred kept saying over and over again, "We're so proud of you all; you've given us such a wonderful life; we're so proud and so thankful for each one of you." And so we were.

"Now you can run along to your Sunday-school class," said Judy.

"I'll come back and pick you up for church," he told us.

"How did you children manage all this without our know-

ing it?" I asked Judy as her father went out.

"It wasn't easy. The last minute something went wrong; that's why we were late. The call had been scheduled for nine o'clock."

"It is one of the loveliest things that ever happened to us," I said, "to hear all those voices at once, from all over the country, and to have that wonderful feeling of being together on this day!"

The days of Judy's unpacking, sorting, and repacking for England were punctuated by iced tea or lemonade and long talks at the kitchen table or out under the willow. It was heaven to have these long hours with her after her years away.

Together we made the wedding cake from the recipe her great-grandmother had used for her grandmother, who had made it for me; and I had made it for Vicki, with Fred's strong arm to stir. Judy and I did such a large one, we had to buy a new dishpan to use as a mixing bowl. It was a wedding cake to end all wedding cakes—literally, as far as I was concerned! But we had fun doing it, running across the road to get our neighbor, Frank, to take a picture of us up to the elbows in fruit and batter.

Judy's wedding dress, made by an excellent tailor in India, and the material for the bridesmaids' dresses, sent by air, had not arrived. Ten days had passed since her homecoming and she had been assured the suitcase would reach Stony Point before she did.

"We still have time," I told her. "Let's not worry about anything until after Betsy's wedding this weekend. Monday morning we'll decide what can be done about it."

So we pushed it out of our minds completely. Well, almost.

## GREAT-GRANDMOTHER KIEHLE'S WEDDING CAKE

(Adapted for Vicki and Judy)

2 pounds butter	75 ounces raisins
2 pounds sugar (sifted)	48 ounces currants
20 eggs	16 ounces mixed glacé fruits
1¼ pounds flour	12 ounces dates
(measured after sifting)	10 ounces citron
1¼ tablespoons cinnamon	6 ounces pecans
1¼ tablespoons cloves	10 ounces candied cherries
1¼ tablespoons mace	(optional)
2 teaspoons salt	4 ounces candied orange
1¼ teaspoons soda	peel
in	½ cup grape juice
1¼ cups molasses	

Beat the butter until soft. Add the sifted sugar gradually. Blend these until they are very light and creamy. Fold in the beaten egg *yolks*. Reserve one cup of flour. Resift the remainder with all the dry ingredients except the soda. Add the sifted dry ingredients to the butter mixture, alternating with the grape juice and the molasses (to which the soda has been added).

Wash the raisins and currants; chop the fruits and nuts; mix together, then sprinkle with the reserved cup of flour and mix it into the fruit thoroughly.

Beat the 20 egg whites until stiff but not dry. Fold them into the butter mixture. Fold in the floured fruit and nuts.

Prepare three-tier wedding cake pans by greasing thoroughly. (We also made a fourth tier by cutting off a 2-pound coffee can to the desired height.) Then line the pans with a layer or two of *heavy* wax paper.

Prepare the oven by placing on the bottom of it shallow pans filled with one inch of hot water.

Place the dough in the greased pans and bake for 4 hours in a slow oven (300° ). The pans of water may be removed for the last fifteen minutes. They may need refilling from time to time.

Let the cakes cool, then remove from the pans; remove wax paper. When completely cool, wrap the cakes in fresh wax paper, then heavy aluminum foil. Store in a cool place. (We used the lower shelves of the refrigerator.)

# 17~

All the children had arrived for Betsy Scott's wedding except Vicki's Jim, who couldn't get away from the satellite tracking station, and John and Anne. The doctor had not given her permission to travel, since the baby was due in a couple of months. It broke Anne's heart, knowing she would have to miss her sister's wedding, too. And Judy had so hoped to have her sing, as Anne had sung at other family weddings. They had talked about Anne's singing at her wedding ever since they were little girls. But the disappointments, deep as they were, were as nothing compared with the joy this long-hoped-for baby would bring to Anne and to us all.

"Mom, stop everything; we need you in the living room," said Janene, coming into a kitchen-in-turmoil. "Dad, you, too. Now, where has Dad gone?"

Fred was located; I grabbed a towel, wiped my hands, and hurried into the living room to find the children all standing alert, some with cameras, waiting for us to take our places behind the table. A huge, flat, beautifully wrapped package all but covered its top. I had forgotten they were bringing our wedding anniversary gift.

"Jim has to leave right after the reception, so we thought we'd better do this now," Janene explained.

"You open it," said Fred.

"You help." It took the two of us to loosen the heavy cardboard inside. When I saw what the gift was, I gave a little cry. "Darling! See what they've done!" I said, throwing my arms around his waist. Cameras flashed to record that moment.

It was the book of Andrew Wyeth's paintings—the book whose prepublication notices we had studied, discarded, pulled out of the wastebasket and considered again in the light of checkbook and budget. Reluctantly, we had decided that this was no time to fly off on a financial spree. We could not afford the book and that was that. We hadn't mentioned this to any of the children. How had they known? Only by understanding us so thoroughly.

Betsy's wedding to Leslie De Groff went off perfectly. Judy, Vicki, and the groom's sister were attendants. This time Judy would not have to worry about the adage that had haunted her through at least three other such occasions, "Three times a bridesmaid but never a bride." Betsy had never looked more beautiful. ("Brides are always beautiful," said Fred.) We both agreed that her mother, in soft aqua, had never looked more beautiful, either. Brother Bob was beaming. The reception was held on the lawns of a lovely old mansion-become-restaurant overlooking the Hudson. It was followed by a scrumptious dinner inside. It was a day we would all remember.

I awoke next morning, knowing that the time had come to face, square on, the fact that nothing had been seen nor heard of the wedding dress and the silk for the bridesmaids' dresses; that so far, we had been unable to find the tall white tapers which, with ivy, were to stand in the church windows for the candlelight service. The wedding cake had still to be decorated ("paved," Fred called it). It was being done by Kim, the daughter of our dear friends, the Pete Allens, *if* Kim's baby didn't arrive at the wrong time! Then there was the photogra-



pher to arrange for in time to choose the book to be sent to John's family in England before Gran's eightieth birthday, and, oh! the sheet cakes for the reception! And . . . Panic swept through me. This would never do.

Fortunately, Judy was still asleep. By the time I surprised her with breakfast in bed, I had made a huge cardboard calendar of the rest of June and July, "on which to schedule our worries," I explained. "We'll put down what has to be done on the date we should do it in order to allow plenty of time to have everything cleared away by the fifteenth of July, when John comes," I told her. "Today we'll phone Walter Brown at the Travel Department of the Commission. He'll know whom to cable about your lost suitcase and how to proceed. He's pulled missionaries out of far worse complications than a missing wedding dress, I know. We'll plan now, how long we feel we can wait before buying or borrowing another wedding dress and set that date on the calendar. That will be Worry-About-Wedding-Dress-Day. Till then, we'll forget it and do other things."

"Mother, you're so organized! And at this hour of the day," said Judy, brightening at the prospect of having everything lined up on paper to cross off when completed. She fell into the plan so well that when I said, "I wish I knew where I could get those candles," she immediately replied, "Mother, this is not Worry-About Candles-Day. This is Worry-About-Sheet-Cake-Day."

Worry-About-Candles-Day came while Judy was visiting the school in Williamson, New York, where she had taught. Her friend Esther Aldridge had been planning for her stay there, all of it a surprise. Judy was so excited she telephoned to tell us of the shower of gifts, the party at the school, the day spent in Rochester buying all her "unmentionables," as her father called them. "Wait till you see them," she told us, "a gorgeous yellow nightie, and slips and bras and girdles and

pants and more nighties and a peignoir. Esther kept egging me on to buy more, then saying, 'And I'm going to get you this and that.' How did *Worry-About-Candle-Day* go, with me not there to take you shopping?"

"Perfectly," I told her. "I suddenly thought of looking for the manufacturer's name on the box of the sample one I found at Malloy's. They're in Hyannis, Massachusetts. I phoned them and the twelve candles will be here within the week."

Though our calendar of events helped greatly, it was not all magic. Flying home from Williamson, Judy had lost her suitcase. It had, apparently, gone on to Boston. She was not to worry, however, it would be delivered to her home in Stony Point next morning. The morning passed. We telephoned at noon. "It's on the truck, lady. Should be there any minute." Six o'clock came. We called again. "Just a minute, I'll check." Long silence. "It's on the truck, lady, should be there any minute." Nine o'clock. Another call. "Just a minute, lady, I'll check." Very long silence. Then, "To tell the truth, lady, we don't know where that truck is. We can't locate it anywhere."

No answering cable arrived from India. No suitcase was found in the airlines' baggage rooms. When I said, "Honey, I've saved the lovely white dress you wore when you graduated from high school," tears came to Judy's eyes. When word finally did come, it was far from reassuring. The suitcase containing her things had been held back to be sent with a larger shipment of the luggage of other returning missionaries. Walter Brown succeeded in locating the shipment, but there was nothing with Judy's name on it.

"It's in with Helen's luggage, then," said Judy.

"Good. Who is Helen? All we have to do is phone her."

"Helen is in Africa on safari," said Judy dully.

Once more, Walter Brown to the rescue. "We'll post a bond and arrange to have you open your suitcase in the presence of the appointed people. If it's here. We'll need your

physical presence to help. Can you come to New York tomorrow?"

"I certainly can," said Judy, "and I'll bring my physical presence with me." It was such a relief to her to be able to do something at last.

"Can't you come, too?" she asked me. "I have to look at bikinis for Vera, one of my missionary friends. She wants me to send her one, to Egypt. We can browse in the stores."

Browsing in stores was not my idea of entertainment, but if the wedding dress could not be found, she might need someone with whom to be miserable.

# 18~

It was a sun-starred day. Judy identified and was given her suitcase. The wedding dress, the rose-colored raw silk, everything was intact. Our neighbor telephoned Fred's office to say that the suitcase from Williamson had arrived soon after we left. We set off on our bikini hunt in high spirits.

"Even this filthy subway looks better to me than it did," said Judy.

"I'm known in certain circles as the woman who wants to paint the subway," I told her.

"That will do for an opening sentence," said Judy. "Go ahead, tell me the rest."

"I was at some meeting for Friendship Press on how technology could be used constructively for the good of mankind. I don't think the idea was original with me; you know how it is in these brainstorming sessions. You know, Judy, there's no reason in the world why the subway stations shouldn't clean themselves. The trash could be consumed automatically, leaving only an ash to be rinsed away three times a day. Then four times a year, the walls could repaint themselves. All you'd have to do would be to program in the colors you wanted for that particular season."

"And let the kids paint murals on them," said Judy.

We spent the rest of the ride having our own brainstorming session. "How about gardens in each subway station? If sunlamps are for tanning yourself, why not for growing plants?"

"Could you use the water from the air conditioning in the buildings above ground to make fountains in the gardens?"

"Why not?"

"Look around at the people," said Judy. "Here we are, sitting opposite one another and nobody is really *seeing* anybody. We should have club cars with armchairs . . ."

". . . and wall-to-wall carpeting—the whole car done in colors that draw people together. The psychologists could work that out."

We thought of handicraft rooms for commuters who travel longer periods of time, laundromats and playrooms for mothers with small children, attractive cubicles where you could be alone to pray or read or just be alone. "Think of what that would mean to a boy from a crowded tenement," said Judy.

"And to think that everything we've talked about could be done right now! We have the technology, the know-how, even the money. Look what we pay our ball players and our entertainers. All we need is to care enough to do it."

Even the bikini hunt was successful.

"I'll start the bridesmaids' dresses tomorrow," said Judy on the way home. "Esther said she'd help me. I'll phone her tonight and she'll come right down."

"Esther is a very busy person," I reminded her. "You can't just call her up and ask her to drop everything and come."

"Anybody else? No. Esther Aldridge? Yes," Judy replied.

It was a glorious weekend, the girls cutting, sewing, trying on, snipping, and hemming. Threads of the lovely soft rose silk would still be found on rugs, chairs, aprons, and Fred's suits long after John arrived.

SUMMER WEDDING

"I'm home," she said,  
her suitcase dropped at the door,  
the arbor arching her head.

"The roses  
never seemed this red before.

"O beautiful, beautiful roses,  
stay this way till he comes!"

As the date of John's arrival approached, Judy became more and more nervous. "Mother, what am I doing? I don't even know the man. Do you realize I'd only been out with him five times before I went to England? And never once alone?" She would wake in the morning and say sleepily, "I've only just got here and now I am leaving you forever. I don't want to get married; yes, I do, but what if I ruin John's life?" In the midst of a delicious luncheon at the shopping center, she would stop eating. "Mother, what if I can't adjust? Suppose I make John miserable?"

"You young people and your adjusting! You think that if you can once find the right formula or see the right psychologist, you'll be able to turn a little switch inside you and you'll be, quote, 'adjusted.' Adjusting is what life is all about—meeting each situation as it comes to the best of your ability, always thinking of the other person's needs. As you speak frankly of your own, of course. You and John are the kind of people who can talk things out. You haven't a thing to worry about."

I could say these words which any mother would say, but her reply was nonetheless true: "You can't see that you and Daddy are among the very, very few lucky people in the world

who love each other. You don't know what it's like out there where other people live."

"You're looking at us as we are now, after forty years together. You can't see the years of give and take it took to grow this marriage. Love is a very tender plant, but lots of fun to take care of."

"I know all that, but suppose I get so I just don't care?"

"Suppose we go find that lace shop and buy the edging for your veil. Brides are always this nervous before their wedding. Grooms are even worse. John is probably saying, 'What am I doing, giving up my freedom to spend the rest of my life with a girl I've hardly seen? I must be crackers! And an American at that!'"

"That's another thing, Mother . . ."

I was sorry I had mentioned it. I certainly hoped that these were no more than the usual premarital jitters. I couldn't remember having had a single qualm before my wedding, but that was back in the days when we did not know we'd have to "adjust." Had society, had I, pressured Judy into this marriage? I had to go back in thought to my first assurances from God, to Judy's joy-filled letters. "John is just the kind of a man I've always dreamed of marrying. And he's like Daddy in so many ways."

By the time the actual day of John's arrival came, Judy was as jittery as we had ever seen her, a situation not helped at all by John's plane being twenty-four hours late. "I can't even remember what his face looks like," she said on our way to the airport. "Suppose I see him and don't like him at all? Suppose he doesn't like *me*?"

"I'll turn around and drive back home if you say so," said her father.

"Daddy!"

We stationed ourselves at various exits, "to be sure John doesn't sneak out on us," said his father-in-law-to-be. Judy



found him first. From that moment on, if asked, they would have assured us that no questions had ever existed in either of their minds.

"What do you think of him?" asked Fred when we were alone.

"I feel as if my last child had come home; as if John had always belonged to me. But now it's so good to see what he looks like and to have him here with us."

"They're just right for each other," said Fred. "I don't know why she had to flagellate herself so, except that you women seem to enjoy worrying."

"Remember what your Grandmother Kiehle used to say? 'I'd like to know who would, around here, if I didn't.'"

Judy got up early the morning after John's arrival. She wanted to see her father before he left for New York. "Oh, Daddy," she said as she hugged him and kissed him good-by, "thank you for being the kind of a man who helped me to know enough to wait for John."

"I don't know what you're talking about; I haven't done a thing," he said, pride and humble gratitude beaming from every pore.

It was beautiful to live in a house so full of happiness it glowed on the walls and sparkled through the windows. I had vowed to leave the two completely alone, but their radiance had a magnetic pull, forcing me to find errands in and out of rooms where they were. Not that it mattered; they could look straight at me without knowing I was there.

As I was getting supper, I noticed that John had come in from his unpacking with what looked like two small gifts. There was some whispering as he and Judy set them on the table, one at Fred's place and one at mine.

Never being able to resist an unopened package, I decided the pickles should go on at once.

"Please don't open these until after dinner. We're hungry," said Judy as I came into the room.

"Do you mean I have to sit here all through the meal and just look at it?" I asked. "John, are you going to let her get away with this?"

That slow, quiet smile, framed by his short reddish beard—no wonder Judy loved him. "Wait till I get her alone in Sheffield," he said.

Why did that word "Sheffield" keep ringing a bell when I heard it? We'd never been there. We didn't know anyone who lived there. It wasn't until the meat was served that I remembered. John picked up his steak knife, looked it over carefully, and said, "Sheffield steel, the best in the world."

The three went on talking about the foundry where John had worked, about the process of pattern making. But for me, this time and this place had dropped away. I was a child again, standing between my father's knees, handing him my broken pencil . . .

## 20~

The lamp in the center of the living-room table would shine down on my father's blue-black hair as he unfolded a used envelope to catch the shavings and pried open the blade of his pearl-handled knife. "Sheffield steel," he would say, "the best in the world." It made me feel that he felt only the best was good enough for the job I had given him to do. This was serious business; none of his rollicking songs or hilarious stories now, none of his usual banter.

"How many times have I told you not to chew the end of your pencil?" he would ask. And once more I would promise never to do it again. What if he thought the battered thing was not worth his effort?

But already he would be turning the yellow stick in his blunt fingers, cutting a perfect circle three-fourths of an inch from the fractured point. Then he would begin carving. The knife would slide along under the shavings, each with its perfect half moon of yellow at the top. They would fall to the paper in open curls and I would pick them up, smell their cedary smell, and rub them between my fingers to feel how soft they were.

I would be watching so intently, my head would get in my father's way and he would have to shift the weight of my body from his arm. (That he was left-handed only added to my

interest in the process.) Now he was ready to sharpen the point. It would be a long one, I'd hope, but not so long that it would break when I used it.

"Stop wiggling," he would say at the first scrape of knife on lead.

"I can't help it," I would tell him. "That scratching noise squinches me; it makes my teeth water."

He would not answer, being absorbed in his sculpting.

"There," he would say at last, testing the point on the forefinger of his right hand. "Here's your pencil. Now just squinch yourself out of here and let me read my paper."

From somewhere across time, I heard Fred say, "I'll get the dessert."

"I'll get it," said Judy.

"No, I'll get it," I said in a daze.

"You talk to the kids, I'll get the dessert," said Fred. "You haven't said a word all evening."

I looked at Judy and John, lost in each other. They did not need any conversation. I wondered if John's father had sharpened his pencil when he was a small boy. "Something has gone out of life that a child can no longer stand between a father's knees and watch him sharpen a pencil," I thought to myself, thinking, too, of the six pencils I whirled through the sharpener each morning in less time than it took to say "Eberhard Faber." Hopefully, a few of the six would *not* have wood to the point on one side, nor on the other, a length of exposed lead to smudge my fingers.

But there was no magic in those pencils—nothing to make me want to run to my room and write something beautiful that very moment, before the point could become the slightest bit dull. This was what my father did for me. It was one of his many ways of reassuring me that the one I wanted most to think well of what I did, cared enough to put down his newspa-

per and prepare for me the perfect tool for my work.

"We've lost something, somewhere between the pearl-handled knife and the modern sharpener," I thought. "It's the caring. Love is caring enough to put down the newspaper."

I went out to the kitchen, ostensibly to get the coffee, but I had to be with Fred at this moment. I missed my father terribly, and I wanted to say the words to Fred that would make him know how much I appreciated being married to a man who could fling the newspaper to the four winds at the right moment.

"Do you two people need any help out there?" Judy called.

"Coming," we both replied.

"You may open your present now," she added. And to John: "That will get the coffee in here in a hurry."

It took no time to remove the ribbon and the tissue paper. What I saw made me gasp, for I knew what was in the smooth leather case I held in my hand—a small, pearl-handled knife of Sheffield steel, "the best in the world." It was exactly like the one my father always used. What more proof did I need that for Judy and John and for their children, everything would be all right.

"You're awfully quiet; what's the matter, are you sick?" asked Fred.

"There are inuendos inherent in that remark, Dr. Frederick Gilman Scovel. You have reason to be thankful that the situation at the moment does not permit my pursuing it right now," I told him.

"That's what I get for marrying an author. Do you know what she's talking about, John? I get the feeling she's trying to tell me something."

"I *am* trying to tell you something," I said. "If you want it in plain Anglo-Saxon, my father's version, 'Young man, you're breathing a scab on the end of your nose.' Let's take

our coffee to more comfortable chairs and get the seven o'clock news."

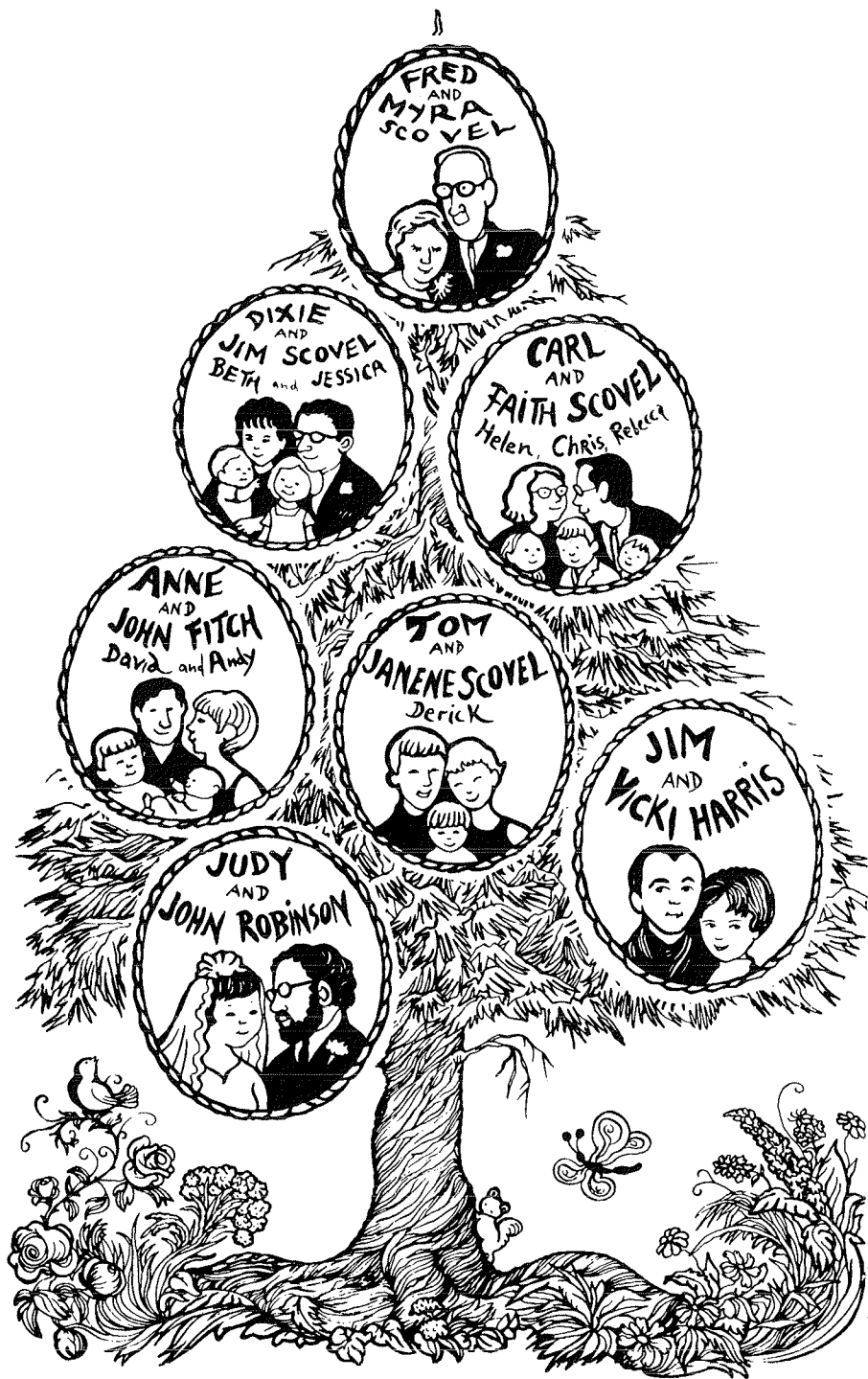
We had been following the events of the Apollo 11 flight from take-off the morning of John's arrival. We continued to do so through that momentous Sunday, July 20, when Aldrin came down the steps of the lunar module and touched the surface of the moon—the first time in history that man had ever "stepped on anything that has not existed on or originated from the Earth," so the NASA Log of Apollo 11 read.

To me, there was an aura of strange mystery around this technological achievement. Were we tampering with a myth? The moon was more than a cold, barren satellite of Earth. What about the tides, growing corn, moon madness?

Except for the first few moments of awe, our family took the whole exploit as a matter of course. We had done it again; we had one more feather in our cap. Yet we saw all around us the disastrous results of our technology, among them the knowledge that there would be fewer and fewer actual *feathers* to stick in anyone's cap.

And it had all happened so quickly! From my father's hand-sharpened pencil to man's walking on the moon, within a few years less than the span of my life!

But the "ancient, beautiful things" remained—birth, death, love, the "way of a man with a maid." As long as our children recognized the worth of these fundamentals, the moon voyage could be taken lightly and I would not mind. Tom, as master of ceremonies for Judy's and John's rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding, regretted that certain parts of his prepared speech had been "stolen." "Still," he said, "I feel it no more than right to use the words, now plagiarized by others, to warn you assembled friends and relatives that this is one small step for Judy, but a giant leap for John."



## 21~

At last, it was the morning of July 26. How could the sun rise as if this were just another day, as if this were not the only wedding since creation? A blessed hush filled the house; no one was in it except the bride, her sister, and her parents.

The other children and grandchildren were at the Gilmor-Sloane estate, as were John and his best man, Eric Sampson. Our beloved friends, Ernie and Edna Moser, who were in charge there, had promised the girls when they were children that they could have their wedding receptions in the beautiful old home (now conference center) left by the Gilmor sisters to the then Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. We had come to live in a smaller house on the estate when we were released from Communist China in the spring of 1951. Ernie and Edna, the Stony Point Presbyterian Church, and its healing community were high on our list of reasons for choosing to make our permanent home in this lovely town.

The Mosers had not forgotten their promise. The women of the church took on one more of their dear, neighborly tasks; two more, really, for they had prepared the food and helped to serve for Vicki's wedding reception, too.

Though we missed seeing more of the others, this was Judy's



day, her last as a child at home. Everything was done that had to be done; this could be a leisurely day for all of us. Breakfast in bed, brought by Fred for each of his women, was followed by a second cup of coffee in the living room with him.

Vicki had us laughing like loons, recounting how she had named her new cat Patrick O'Harris in front of the horrified veterinarian. "What, then, are you going to name your children?" he had asked. "Rover and Spot," Vicki had told him. She told Judy the story of how she had dressed for her own wedding. She had borrowed a very long "Merry Widow" bra from a friend much taller than she. Discovering a run in her stocking, just before she put on her wedding dress, she found she couldn't bend over to take off the stocking.

"The only thing I could do was to shout for Mom and fall back on the bed with both feet in the air, waiting for her to pull off the stockings," she said. "I thought she'd never get me up on my feet again. I didn't sit down once the whole day, not until I dressed to go on my honeymoon. Remember, Mamma?"

I remembered. The morning passed quietly, blessedly. John came in for lunch, bringing Eric, who was also from Sheffield, and who made us all wish we had one more girl in the family! After lunch, Judy and John phoned his parents in England and we had a chance to hear their dear voices. John's mother and I shed a few tears together—I, knowing so well how she must feel to be so far away on this special day in her son's life.

Guests arrived—Flo, Judy's roommate at Western College, and her husband, Linc; then Charlotte and Herrick Young (president of Western and lifelong friends). We left the four to reminisce and went upstairs to dress.

Vicki and I got the bride arrayed, all but her veil. Wanting to talk, Judy followed me into my room to be with me while I dressed. How beautiful she looked in the glowing white silk, her whole body relaxed, serene, her deep brown eyes thoughtful.

"I won't be Judy Scovel ever again," she said.

"Yet you're not sorry."

"No, I'm not sorry. Being Judith Robinson is so thrilling, I can hardly bear to think about it. But what happens to Judy Scovel? She was a real, live person. She didn't die; she just doesn't exist any more. And it's not sad."

"She's a new being," I said, "a very beautiful new being."

"Maybe that's what death is," said Judy. "Maybe that other person you've always been isn't there any more, but there's no sadness about it, no feeling of regret that it's happened; you're just a new person with a new name."

"I think we've discovered something," I said weakly.

"I think we have," said Judy. "Shall I put on my veil now?"

Vicki came in to say the photographer had arrived, but I sat quiet for a moment. Judy had given me, on her wedding day, what might be the most important gift I would ever receive. Never again could I look at death without seeing before me that lovely, happy bride with "a new name."

I walked down the aisle of the church on the arm of our oldest—dear, wonderful, dependable Jim—who patted my arm as I stepped into the pew alone. Tom, and Betsy's brother, another "Jim," were also ushers. Tom's wife, Janene, was ready with her violin, and she played so well we were swept up to a new height in preparation for what was to come.

As Georgina Springsteen played the organ and the congregation sang "O Perfect Love," Betsy and Vicki came down the aisle, the light of the candles catching the shimmer of their soft rose dresses. My voice broke when I saw Judy on the arm of her father. She smiled her love as she passed, then stood facing the two ministers—her brother, Carl, and our own pastor, the Rev. Robert MacLennon. Fred put her hand in John's and stepped into the pew, leaning to kiss me as he took his place beside me.

The wedding ceremony was a deeply moving Celebration

of Holy Communion for the whole congregation, during which John and Judy became man and wife. They walked out into life as all of us sang with fervor "Now Thank We All Our God."

The rest of the day was a whirl of joy as we introduced our son John to family friends, ate the delicious food, cut the "paved" wedding cake, and sent the bride and groom off to The Waldheim on Big Moose Lake for their honeymoon.

Vicki, Fred, and I had Sunday together before we took her to the airport to go back to her Jim. My knees were beginning to feel a bit shaky. "You must be dead tired," said Vicki. "You know, it *is* a lot of work, getting a child married."

"'All that fuss for less than an hour,' someone said to Mother after our wedding," I recalled. "But 'all that fuss' has given me some of the most precious hours of my life with you two. I'm realizing again today, as I did at your wedding, how very much I missed not having had this time with Anne when she was married."

"Well, you couldn't afford to fly back from India," said Vicki. "It was just one of those things. You'll make it up to Anne when you're with her after this baby is born."

Oh, it would be good to hold a baby in my arms again!

"Wasn't Judy beautiful?" I said to Fred when we got back from seeing Vicki off. "She was just radiant."

"All brides are radiant," said Fred, "but none so radiant as Judy."

"It's a funny feeling, to have it suddenly all over," I said.

"It sure is quiet around here. Do you realize we're the only ones in the house?"

"For the rest of our lives," I thought. "It's all over, my being a mother."



## 22~

The plane carrying Judy and John to their new life took off for England before midnight on August 24. When I got up next morning, the house was empty, no longer home for any of our six children. The house was empty and I was empty of everything except that sick, hollow feeling all mothers know.

My words at the airport had fooled no one; my "bravery," as I saw it this morning, was a lie. Why hadn't I thrown myself into Judy's arms so we could both cry it out together? It might have been more healing in the end. It might have spared Fred (who was carrying his own burden of grief) my long, hard sobbing after the plane left. I didn't know which would have been better. I didn't know anything except that I was as dry as parched desert and afraid to open again the floodgate of my emotions. There was that last, awful task still ahead of me.

If I were to be Fred's wife again—if I were to be a person and not a selfish, pitiful, sniveling mother—the house would have to be even emptier than it was now. I had learned something from earlier separations. I remembered that I couldn't pass Vicki's white dresser with the pink rose in the vase by the mirror without bursting into tears; that I could not sweep under the bed and find Tom's old Punjabi slippers without

collapsing on the floor to sit for a moment holding them. The Shanghai American School penant on Carl's wall, or the half-finished sketch on Jim's desk, or Anne's evening dress hanging in a closet could reduce me to jelly for the rest of the day. Even a bobby pin on the bathroom floor was enough to call up an agonizing groan.

I rose from the breakfast table, placing one foot firmly before the other ("as a man goes to the gallows," I thought, and could almost laugh at my own dramatics). I walked into Judy's room, stripped the bed, moving faster now, lest I dwell too long on the thought that she was born in this bed and that the hollow in the center was the same hollow she had snuggled into as a child.

"Don't think," I told myself. "Work. Pack the clothes for the Salvation Army. Throw out the last inch of shampoo without remembering that she will be living in Iran and won't be home for Christmas vacation to use it up. Take Fred's Scotch tape and scissors back to his study. Throw the broken bits of jewelry into the wastebasket. No, you can still see them there. Put them in the garbage pail in the kitchen; better yet, in the can outside. Hang that Indian print over the blank space on the wall where Fred's pastel of her college chapel hung. Get out different covers for bed and dresser. Arrange some ivy in the Indian bowl. Where is the Indian bowl? Upstairs? Upstairs. There, set the ivy on the empty bookcase. Better fill up the bookcase, too—a good place for the art books."

By late afternoon, Judy's room had become the guest room. When she and John came again, they would sleep in the larger family room in the basement. Hopefully, I would become a new woman. Not that I would cast off motherhood entirely, but it would be a new kind of motherhood, a "fun motherhood, without the discipline and without the responsibilities," I tried to tell myself.

What I had to cast off was "smotherhood." I had seen too

much of it to want it for any of our children, certainly not for myself in the role of "smother." I must let each one of them belong completely and wholly to someone else. "No, you are *not* going to start crying again," I told myself sternly. "The children belong to your other six children—those you prayed for every day as yours were growing up. This is just what you wanted for them. Go wash your face and change your dress. Now, think of the fun of going off on trips alone with Fred. Think of going off on your very next trip."

Yes! Think of being with Anne and seeing for the first time that dear little Andrew Swallen Fitch. We had been so very disappointed at not having Anne and her family at the wedding. Now we could only be thankful that she had done exactly as the doctor had said, that all had gone well, that our family was richer by one small Andy. He was now ten days old. Anne had asked me to wait until after Judy left before going to Saranac Lake because she had to move into her new home when the baby was less than two weeks old and she felt I would be more help to her then. Only three more days and I would be with them.

"How did you get through the day?" Fred asked when he came in. Was it pretty bad?"

By then I could say, "Yes, it was pretty bad. But this is a good kind of separation. It isn't like sending a son off to this horrible war. Judy and John will have their ups and downs, but it will be a full, rich, God-guided, wonderful life. I'm ashamed of the way I acted last night."

"You shouldn't be. It was the right kind of sorrow, too." He was halfway upstairs to change into more comfortable clothes.

"All our separations have been the good kind," he said when he returned. Dinner was on the table and we sat down. "The kids have gone off to good schools, to their own choices of jobs, to their own homes. They've even been to the ends

of the earth on the right kinds of business. We've been very lucky people."

"It's been a lot more than just good luck," I said. "We've had God to guide us. I'll admit it hasn't always been easy to do what He said, and sometimes we weren't even sure it was He who was saying it, but if we made wrong choices, it wasn't because we didn't try."

"Maybe even in the trying, something useful happened," he said. "Have you ever wondered what that first family would have been like if they had obeyed God?"

"Adam and Eve, you mean? No, I never have, and I've thought a lot about them. I could write a whole book on Adam and Eve—the beautiful garden, God creating that precious thing called a family, making man and woman in His own image, allowing them to develop physically and psychologically so they could enjoy each other and enjoy Him; so they could produce children and enjoy them—"

"And it was right there," Fred broke in, "when they didn't do what God said, that the joy went out of their relationships—when they thought they were gods and went their own ways. But I don't see that you have a book. Somebody else got in ahead of you; it's all been written in that Best Seller."

"I'm talking about the implications for today—the care of the garden, all its animals, birds, rivers placed in their hands; the quarreling children; the boy gone wrong; violence; woman, the help-(to)-meet-(the emergencies); woman, the enabler—"

"I see what you mean. And families today have to make the same decision Adam and Eve had to make, whether to listen to God or to 'turn Him off'; whether to love Him or to ignore Him."

"Today it's even harder. Choices to be made are hurled at us so fast we can have made one wrong choice, leading to a multiple of wrong choices, before we even know we're off the



track," I went on. "That's why I don't see how people can get along without God's help. It's a lot easier to make right choices if you take time to be quiet each day, to think through your problems and ask Him for help. Honey, what *would* we have done without Him?"

We were both silent, thinking of all we had been through together. "God has answered our prayers," said Fred.

I went out to get the dessert and coffee. "Speaking of prayers," he continued when I returned, "right now I wish we'd put in for having Judy and John live next door to us."

"I thought of it all the time they were here," I said. "But it wouldn't be good for them or for us. We'd get more and more dependent upon them and the first thing you'd know, they'd be stuck with two grumpy, demanding old folks."

"We could have put in for Rochester or Syracuse," he said.

"Oh, Fred, we shouldn't joke. No matter what happens to us now, each one of our children will have someone who loves him or loves her more than anyone else in the world."

"We've seen times when it would be hard to imagine this would ever be," he said.

We were both thinking of those terrible days of the Sino-Japanese War, when Fred had been shot, when we never knew from one moment to the next whether or not we and all the children would be lined up before a firing squad.

"Miracles *do* happen," I said. "We have so much to be thankful for."

"Not the least of which is that I have my own bride back again," he said, reaching for my hand.

"Oh, darling, as soon as we get back from taking care of the baby for Anne, let's do something wild for our fortieth honeymoon."

"Like flying to Mexico City to see the ballet?"

"Why not?" I said. "Mexico would be a wonderful place to start a whole new era."

WHAT DO THEY DO?

What do they do on blissful days like this,  
these poor who have no God?

When autumn sets a torch to every tree,  
when ecstasy  
would all but burst the heart,  
what do they do,  
with no one to say thank you to?